ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE **ENVIRONMENTAL FRAMEWORK PROGRAM** 2020

EUSKO JAURLARITZA GOBIERNO VASCO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

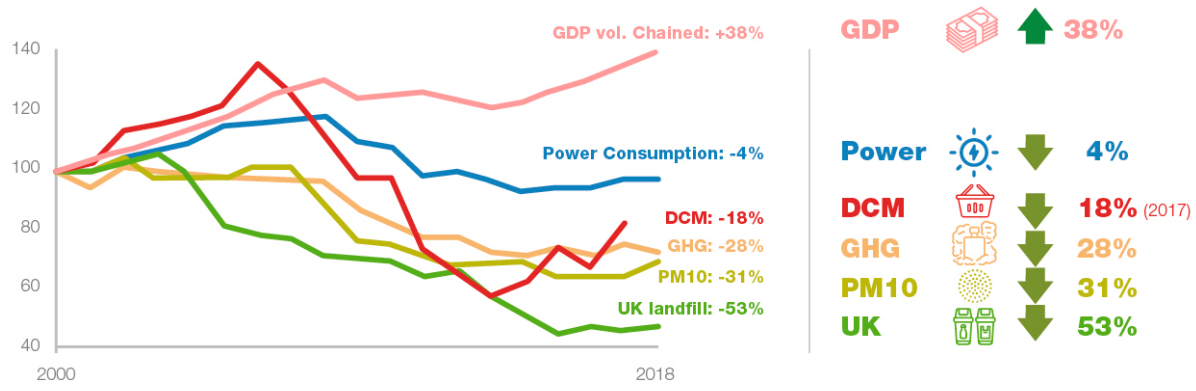
The achievement of environmental and climate objectives does not depend solely on implementing environmental legislation but also requires environmental considerations to be integrated into other policies, as has been repeatedly emphasized in the programs of the European Commission[1] and the Basque Country[2].

The Basque Country evaluates its progress in environmental policy with different tools. The monitoring and assessment reports of each of the planning documents, the features reflected in Eustat[3] and in the Statistical Environmental Body[4], the monographic profiles for each of the environmental vectors, the reports of integrated indexes such as the Ecological Footprint or the Environmental Performance Index, or the progress reports of the Basque Country 2030 Agenda, are some of the most relevant assessment instruments.

Below appears the **decoupling** graph from 2000 until 2018, of the Basque economy with some of the main environmental headline features. In all these features decoupling is absolute, i.e. while GDP increases all of them decrease. This graph clearly shows that **environmental policy is bearing fruit.**

However, it is not a perfect photograph. It should be noted that the absence of some relevant indexes, such as one that synthesizes the evolution of biodiversity (no single index has been standardized at the European level to reflect the complexity of the evolution of the biodiversity quality[5]) means that there are limitations when studying the system as a whole.

Figure 1. Decoupling Economy-Environment of the Basque Country 2000-2018



GDP: Gross Domestic Product**, DCM**: Domestic Consumption of Materials, **GHG**: Greenhouse Gases, **UK**: Urban Waste, **PM10**: Particles with a particle size greater over 10 microns.

This report shows that since the approval of the 4th WFP 2020 in December 2014, substantial progress has been made in relevant environmental issues, although the new challenges entail the need to accelerate the transformation process in a medium to long term.

[1] 7th Europe Environment Programme 2014-2020.

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/factsheets/7eap/es.pdf

[2] The Basque Country Environmental Framework Programme 2020

https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/5724/Programa_Marco_Ambiental_CAPV_2020.pdf?1422951795

[3] https://www.eustat.eus/indice.html

[4] https://www.euskadi.eus/informazioa/ingurumen-lurralde-plangintza-eta-etxebizitza-sailaren-estatistikak/web01-s2ing/eu/

[5] The estimation of the Biodiversity Footprint performed in Switzerland is of great interest, as simplification of the complex question of the integrity of the biosphere. https://www.bipindicators.net/

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is twofold:

- On the one hand, to perform a closure of the environmental planning of the Basque Government to the year 2020, through a **technical evaluation of the progress and challenges** based on the objectives established both at European and Basque level, contextualized in the 4th Environmental Framework Program 2020
- On the other hand, to guide **environmental priorities** which must be specified into actions in the next planning period of the new 2030 Environmental Framework Program.

BACKGROUND

In February 2017, the European Commission published for the first time the instrument called **"Environmental Implementation Review**" (**EIR**) with the general purpose of monitoring the achievement of the objectives of existing EU environmental policies and legislation through its programmed actions and monitoring the implementation of common rules agreed by the European Parliament and Member States.

The EIR provides an informed and synthetic picture of the environmental implementation situation, creates the opportunity for a structured dialogue on achievements and challenges to address the necessary measures, provides a structured basis for policy discussions and deliberations between EU institutions, and identifies and shares best practices and common issues.

In June 2018, in line with the EIR instrument of the European Commission, the Basque Government presented its first comprehensive analysis report named "**Assessment of the Environmental Framework Programme 2020**"[6] (hereinafter **EIR Basque Country 2018**) in which progress is presented in the achievement of the proposed strategic objectives, it indicates the challenges, opportunities and points of excellence of the Basque environmental policy and, finally, potential action proposals are identified which serve to improve the performance of the WFP 2020 in its final period, 2018-2020.

In the **2018 EIR Basque Country** report, four were the main identified challenges:

1. Progress articulating a low-carbon economy and improving the preservation status of habitats;
2. Making the most of entrepreneurship niches in business activities improving the environment;
3. Progress in the evaluation of the effectiveness of both regulations and environmental policy and in a real and effective coordination between different public administrations;
4. To undertake a systemic fiscal policy, comprised by the objectives of environmental policy.

This report was presented to civil society at a public meeting on environmental policies organized by the Basque Government in Donostia-San Sebastián on 8 June 2018, very favourably highlighted by the European authorities for its content and technical rigor, as well as for the initiative to compare it with business and social agents.

[6] http://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/informe-seguimiento-iv-programa-marco-ambiental-pais-vasco

Below appears a summary of the main advances made up to the conclusion of the 4th WFP 2020 in these 4 challenges:

Table 1. Progress on the challenges identified in the "EIR Basque Country 2018" report

	Identified challenges	Highlights 2018-2020	Progress degree
1.	Low-carbon economy and habitat preservation	• Institutional statement of the Basque Government of Climate Change emergency. • Integrated LIFE Urban Klima 2050 project. • Preliminary draft of the Basque Climate Change Law. • Public Use Plan for the Txingudi Marshes Protected Natural Area.	
2.	Environmental entrepreneurship	• Internship programme to promote youth employment in the environmental sector.	
3.	Evaluation of environmental legislation and policy	• Monitoring report on Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country 2030. • Environmental profile: Climate Change 2019 and Contaminated Soils 2020.	
4.	Taxation with environmental objectives	• Draft Law on Environmental Administration of the Basque Country with section on Environmental Taxation. • Technical preparatory work for the Departments of Economy and Finance and Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government for the implementation of tax figures related to pollution.	

Legend: Green: Significant progress. Yellow: Some progress, but not enough. Red: Clearly insufficient progress.

In April 2019, the European Commission published the "**Second Environmental Implementation Review" (EIR Europe 2019),** an overview of how EU environmental policies and laws are applied on site[7]. This report states in relation to the Basque Country: "*It is worth highlighting as a positive and innovative practice the exercise performed by the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, which has carried out the assessment report on the implementation of the autonomous strategy regarding environmental issues 2020, following the model of the EIR review of the Commission of 2017. This exercise also stimulated the knowledge and discussion based on environmental enforcement issues*."

This Assessment Report of the 4th Environmental Framework Program 2020, applies again the methodology and structure of the EIRs of Europe, to update the EIR Report of the Basque Country 2018 and assess the implementation of the 4th WFP 2020. It incorporates in its study aspects as relevant at European level as the European Green Pact presented in January 2020 by the new Commission or the Action Plan for a circular economy dated March 2020, and at the level of our territory aspects such as the Declaration of climate emergency approved by the Basque Government in July 2019, the approval of the Circular Economy Strategy 2030 in January 2020 or the emergency situation caused by the serious accident at the Zaldibar landfill in February 2020.

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/country-reports/index_en.htm

PART I. THEMATIC AREAS

1. TURNING THE BASQUE COUNTRY INTO A COMPETITIVE, LOW-CARBON AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

MEASURES TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

EUROPE: The new **Circular Economy Action Plan**[8] presents new initiatives throughout the product lifecycle to modernise and transform our economy while protecting at the same time the environment. It is driven by the ambition to make sustainable products that last and to enable European citizens to be fully involved in the circular economy and to benefit from the positive changes it generates. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey, the increasing amount of waste is one of Europeans' top three environmental concerns. The interviewed individuals consider that the most effective way to address environmental problems is to change the way we consume and produce.

On January 7, 2020, the Basque Government approved the "**Circular Economy Strategy of the Basque Country 2030**"[9] which aims to promote the transition of the Basque Country towards a circular economy model and to position itself as a reference region in Europe.

It establishes three strategic objectives:

1. **To increase material productivity by 30%**. In 2017, the material productivity of the Basque Country stood at €2.8/kg (€2.1/kg EU). The goal is to reach 4.3€/kg. By increasing material productivity, the Basque Country seeks to decouple economic growth from material consumption.
2. **To increase the rate of use of circular material by 30%**. This rate allows measuring the contribution of recycled materials to the total demand for materials and represents a key element to assess the circularity of the Basque economy. Increasing this rate not only means reducing dependence on imports or the extraction of raw materials, but also contributes to reducing waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill. Achieving this target would also imply going from a waste recirculation of 50% in 2016 to 72% in 2030. In 2016, the circular material use rate was 9.9%, and the established objective is to reach 12.8%.
3. **Reduce by 30% of GDP the waste generation rate per unit.** In 2016, in the Basque Country, 67 kg of waste (excluding major mineral waste) were generated per 1,000 euros of GDP. The goal for 2030 is to lower that figure to 46 kg.

In addition, the Strategy includes two complementary objectives regarding waste streams prioritised by the European Commission, which are:

- to halve the generation of food waste (i.e., from 172 to 86 kg/hab/year).
- achieve 100% recyclability of plastic packaging.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the Circular Economy Strategy 2030 is deployed in 10 lines of action around 4 areas (Competitiveness and innovation, Production, Consumption, Waste management and secondary raw materials). The 2025 Action Plan specifies the priority actions to be implemented over the next 5 years. It entails the implementation of a series of instruments by the Administration, such as the development of specific legislation for certain waste streams; investment aids, especially in waste management infrastructures, productive efficiency, and new businesses; R&D&i aids; tax deductions; environmental fees and taxes; development of technical standards and methodologies to facilitate the use of secondary materials; and training, knowledge generation, and transfer, among other measures.

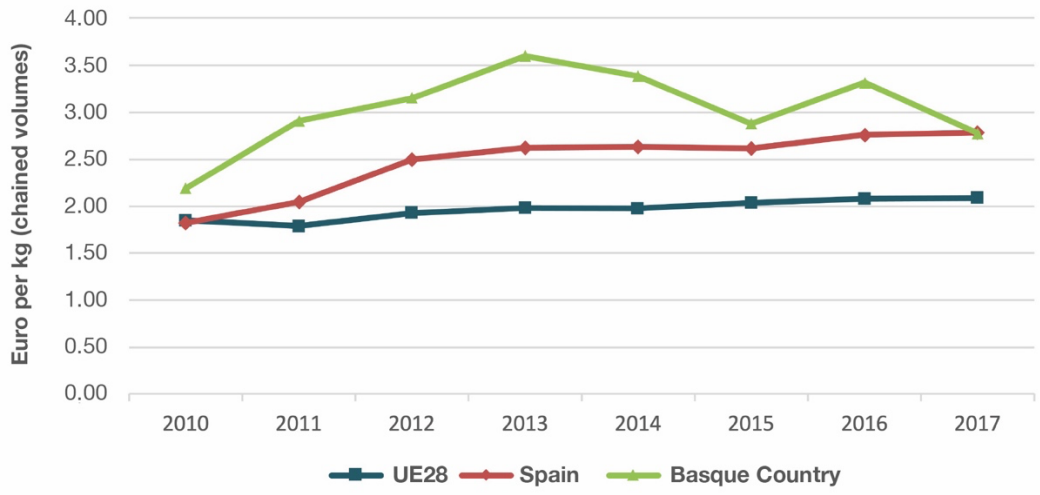
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf

[9] https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/es/news/59496

Some of the expected results from the promotion of the Strategy are to increase the turnover of Basque companies in more circular products to reach 10,000 billion euros, create 3,000 new jobs in the circular economy, and reduce carbon emissions associated with consumption by 26%. Currently, there are 18,500 jobs related to circular economy activities in the Basque Country, slightly over 2% of the total jobs in the Basque economy. It is important to highlight that the transition towards a circular economy can open up new and significant sources of employment in the Basque Country.

The Basque Country is a pioneer at European level within **the monitoring framework for the circular economy**. The document "Basque Country Circular Economy Indicators 2018"[10]develops the 10 indicators of the European monitoring framework that cover each of the phases (production, consumption, waste management, and secondary raw materials) and economic aspects (investments, employment, gross value added, and innovation) and adds a set of auxiliary indicators that complement the analysis.

Figure 2. Resource productivity 2010-2017



As mentioned, the Circular Economy Strategy includes an action plan for the period 2020-2025 with a total investment of around 20 million euros. The budget allocated to the actions under "Competitiveness and Innovation," accounting for nearly 50% of the budget, will be the most significant component.

Below appear some indicators that show the leadership position of the Basque Country in this field[11]:

- More than 240 Basque companies are applying the principles of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).
- 65 companies certified in eco-design under UNE EN ISO 14006[12].
- 43 products with EPD System[13].
- 115 products in 18 Basque companies with the European Ecolabel.
- 84 Basque entities with EMAS certification.
- 8 Environmental footprints of product and organization.

[10] http://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/indicadores-economia-circular-euskadi-2018-marco-seguimiento-europeo

[11] Data relating to April 2020.

[12] This certificate demonstrates that the organization has adopted an ecodesign management system to identify, control, and continuously improve the environmental aspects of its products and/or services, taking into account their life cycle.

[13] Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) are a transparent and comparable system of environmental information for products, based on common standards for all products of the same category.

Below appear the main conclusions drawn from the report "**Positioning of Basque companies regarding the opportunities offered by the circular economy" 2020**, carried out by Orkestra-Ihobe, which analyzes 49 active business experiences in the Circular Economy as a starting point to delve into the effects it has on competitiveness."

1. The Circular Economy represents a great opportunity for companies. The expectations of revenue growth are higher for products or services derived from circular economy projects than for traditional ones.
2. The most advanced companies systematically include circular economy activities.
3. There are expectations of growth in the importance of after-sales services and new business models in the context of the circular economy.
4. The circular economy projects developed by companies are mostly profitable from an economic point of view.
5. In addition to achieving environmental results, the practical application of the circular economy in companies contributes to improving corporate reputation, opening up new markets, and enhancing the value of sales.
6. Anticipating legislation is a fundamental argument for carrying out circular economy activities. Indeed, the low willingness of the market to value environmentally more sustainable products or services and the lack of human resources (available time) for projects are aspects that make it difficult to carry out such activities.
7. Legislative function, along with the provision of economic support, is understood as the key and catalyzing role of the Public Administrations.

In this regard, the **Industrial Ecobarometer of Basque Companies 2020** highlights that 65% of companies indicate that they are already minimizing their waste and 58% are already saving on material consumption. In relation to the reasons for developing actions to improve resource efficiency, the awareness and commitment of ownership and/or management is becoming increasingly important (23%), with the second reason being legislation, regulations and standards in force (21%). On the other hand, the main obstacles indicated to develop these circular economy actions are: the cost of the actions (54%), the lack of experience in this type of actions (34%), the difficulty of selecting the most appropriate actions (26%) and the difficulty of adapting environmental legislation to the company (25%).

SMEs and resource efficiency

The “efficiency in the use of resources” of Basque SMEs continues being a challenge. The **Industrial Ecobarometer of the Basque companies 2020** reflects relevant differences in aspects of circular economy based on the size of the workforce. For example, when they are asked: What percentage of the company´s total costs are the costs of the materials? Of companies with more than 250 employees, 16% report that these costs represent less than 40%, while in companies with between 50-249 employees this percentage is 23% and in micro-SMEs (with less than 50 employees) it is 38%. However, the reality is that their raw material costs are usually above 40% of their total costs and that circular economy measures may be highly profitable.

There are also important differences between large companies and SMEs among those that indicate that they are developing actions to become more efficient. For example, 54% of those with less than 50 employees report savings in materials, while this percentage amounts to 66% among those with 50-249 employees and 74% among those with 250 or more employees. On the other hand, only 19% of those with less than 50 employees say that they design products easy to maintain, repair or use, while among those with 250 or more employees this percentage rises to 45%.

Eco-innovation

For 26% of Basque industrial companies with more than 10 employees, the most important objective for achieving competitiveness is to increase productivity. The incorporation of technology and innovation is mentioned as the main objective by 20% of the companies, while a slightly lower percentage (19%) mentioned the opening of new markets and/or internationalization, and cost reduction by 18%. To maximize resource efficiency, 18% of companies consider it relevant to promote environmental innovation programs.

Among the industrial companies aware of the main environmental innovation program services offered by the Basque Government (Ihobe), 43% say they know a lot or quite a lot about these programs, representing 12% of the total number of companies. However, in the case of the financing and technical-strategic support service for eco-innovative projects (product durability/material efficiency), 36% are very or fairly familiar with this service, which represents 10% of the total.

The **main obstacles to eco-innovation** can be divided into:

- 54% of industrial companies indicate as an obstacle the cost of actions when developing measures to improve resource efficiency. In the case of IPPC companies, this proportion increases to 79%.
- 34% point the lack of experience in this type of action as obstacle.
- 26% point to the difficulty of selecting the most appropriate resource efficiency improvement actions for their company.
- 25% cited the difficulty of adapting environmental legislation to their company as an obstacle. In the case of IPPC companies, the proportion increases to 42%.
- 18% cited a lack of suppliers of necessary materials, parts, products or services as an obstacle. This proportion is somehow higher, especially in R&D&I companies.

The Basque Government's Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment has been very active within the framework of the 2020 Science Technology and Innovation Plan. The 36 innovative projects in circular economy in 2019, together with the 118 performed in previous editions, add up to a budget of 4 million euros of aid through the Public Company Ihobe to 57 beneficiary companies during the period 2016-2019. This aid is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Specifically, the estimated environmental and economic results of the set of projects supported by the 2019 Call of the "Eco-innovation and eco-design program for the circular economy" of Ihobe, if the technical, economic, environmental and commercial viability of all of them is confirmed within 3 years after their completion, are as follows:

- a saving of 460,000 tons/year of materials and a reduction of 55,000 tons/year of greenhouse gases (GHGs);
- the generation of 156 new jobs, an additional turnover of 116 million euros per year and the execution of 24 million euros new investments.

Linked to these achievements reached by Basque companies, the Basque Government has continued collaborating in the **Basque Ecodesign Hub** with the three main Basque universities: University of the Basque Country; Deusto University; Mondragón Unibertsitatea; and with the Novia Salcedo foundation. This initiative, whose main target is young students in their final university year or unemployed, serves to train them as specialists in Ecodesign and circular economy and, at the same time, to facilitate their employability by meeting the demand from the industry for this type of professionals. More than 135 students have concluded the theoretical training and 118 have concluded the internships in the company. This advanced training centre facilitates the development of technical projects in collaboration with industrial companies in the Basque Country. A total of 76 companies and clusters have developed 147 projects within the last 5 years (2015-2019) through the Basque Ecodesign Hub.

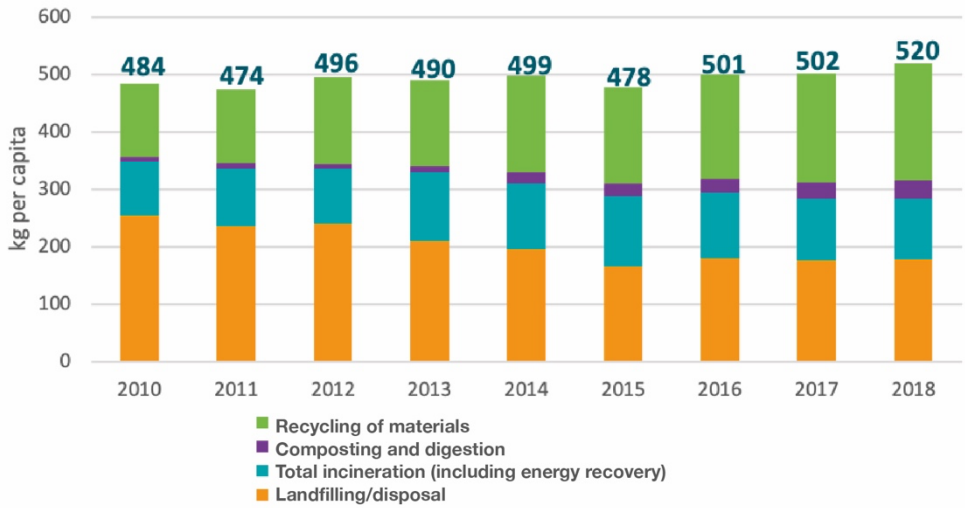
WASTE MANAGEMENT

EUROPE: The transformation of waste into resources is facilitated by:

(i) the full implementation of EU waste legislation, including waste hierarchy, the need to ensure separate waste collection, the limitation of landfilling, etc.; ii) the reduction of waste generation and waste generated per capita in absolute terms; and iii) the limitation of energy recovery to non-recyclable materials and the gradual elimination of landfilling of recyclable or recoverable waste.

This section focuses on municipal waste management[14], for which EU law sets mandatory recycling targets.

Figure 3. Municipal waste in the Basque Country by type of treatment 2010-2018



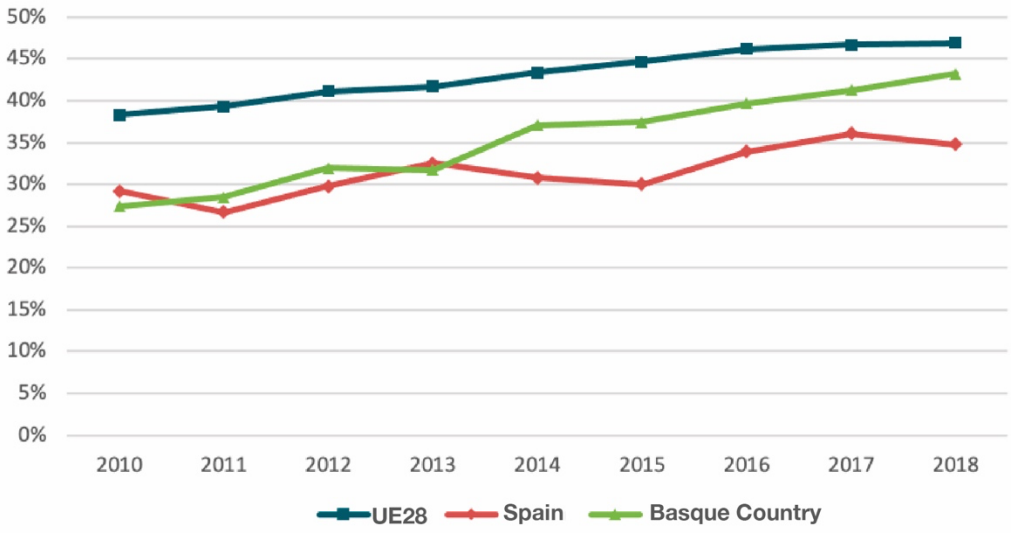
The amount of municipal waste generated has increased slightly over recent years. The average in the Basque Country in 2018 is 520kg/year/inhabitant (in Spain 475 and in the EU 488kg/year/inhabitant[15]).

The graph presents a breakdown by methods of treatment of municipal waste in the Basque Country in kg and per capita. We can confirm that the treatment of municipal waste has improved in recent years. There has been a significant progress in the reduction of landfill waste, although still almost 35% of this waste ends up in landfills (EU 24%). Incineration has increased slightly since 2010 and it has remained at 20.3% in 2018 (still below the EU average of around 28% in 2017). Recycling of materials has improved to 39% (EU average: 29% in 2017). However, only 5.9% waste was composted.

[14] Municipal waste is mixed waste and separately collected waste of household origin and from other sources, if such waste is similar in nature and composition to waste of household origin. This definition is understood without prejudice to the distribution of responsibilities in relation to waste management between public and private agents.

[15] www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Figure 4. Percentage of municipal waste recycling 2010-2018



As stipulated by the EU, the ultimate goal is to replace linear production models with circular models that reincorporate waste materials into the production process. As shown in the graph, the Basque Country does not take full advantage of the opportunities to prevent and recycle municipal waste, placing us below the European average. Since 2010, the Basque Country has increased its recycling rate from 27% to 43%.

To advance this policy, the Basque Country has a **Waste Prevention and Management Plan 2020**[16] which was approved in March 2015. It is currently in the last phase of developing a new planning framework with a 2030 horizon. In 2017, the evaluation of the Plan was performed. In brief, this evaluation highlighted, on the one hand, the need to better address information on packaging and end-of-life vehicles, contaminated soil and the import/export of waste, and, on the other hand, the need to establish new specific objectives for municipal waste, packaging, used oils, batteries, construction and demolition waste and WWTP sludge.

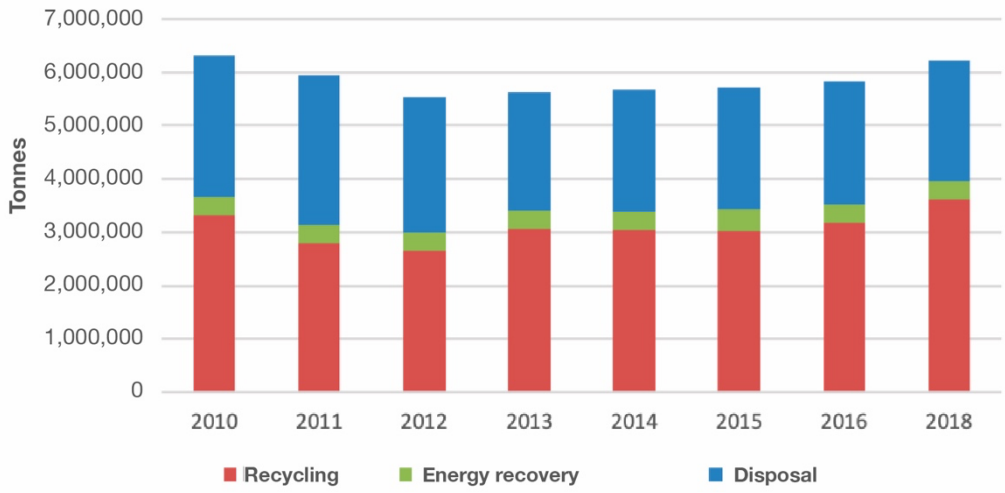
There is no obligation to collect food and garden waste separately. However, the Basque Government has approved an **Action Plan against food wastage**[17]with the aim of promoting and supporting a set of specific actions aimed at preventing and reducing the amount of food wasted throughout the food production, supply and consumption chain in the Basque Country.

Regarding **waste management**, it should be highlighted that there are not enough economic incentives to divert waste from landfills and incineration towards recycling. In addition, local waste fees are not linked to the amount of waste generated and therefore do not provide an incentive to encourage separate collection and recycling.

[16] https://www.euskadi.eus/gobierno-vasco/-/libro/plan-de-prevencion-y-gestion-de-residuos-de-la-capv-2020/

[17] https://sostenibilidad.elika.eus/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/10/PLAN-DespilfarroalimentarioWEB.pdf

Figure 5. Waste management in the Basque Country (2010-2018)



At global level **of waste generation, it should be noted that** in 2018 the Basque Country generated 6 million tons, being Non-Hazardous Waste 3.3 million (55% of the total), the most significant category. The evolution of total waste generation over the last few years has been fairly stable and no significant reductions have been observed in the different types of waste. In relation to its management, it should be noted that disposal has gone from 42% in 2010 to 36% in 2018, with recycling being the beneficiary, going from 52% to 58%. However, waste recovery represents only 6% and is one of the pending issues that must be addressed as a priority.

The new instruments established in the Circular Economy Strategy 2030 and in the future Waste Prevention and Management Plan for the Basque Country to 2030 should bring about a significant change in both the generation and management of waste. The Basque Country has proven that it is possible to grow economically and reduce both the consumption of materials and the waste generated. Since 2000, GDP has grown by 26%, while material consumption has decreased by 25% and the volume of urban waste ending up in landfills has decreased by 56%. However, the data indicate that this trend towards a zero waste economy needs to be accelerated, and to this end it is a priority to establish economic signals and incentives.

Priority actions in Circular Economy and waste in the Basque Country

1. Increase the price of landfill with recyclable or recoverable waste by means of a fee to minimize waste generation and promote reuse and recycling, channelling this income towards programs to promote eco-innovation, eco-design and circular economy in Basque companies.
2. The collapse of the Zaldibar landfill has highlighted the need to strengthen the management and storage of industrial waste in the Basque Country. It is required to implement an Advanced Centre for Non-Hazardous Waste Management (Garbigunes industrial) where a comprehensive products treatment with greater possibilities for recovery is prioritized.
3. Zero dumping of primary urban waste (without prior treatment) and improvement and extension of selective waste collection, including bio-waste.
4. Integrate circular economy into priority areas of advanced manufacturing and energy of the 2030 Science, Technology and Innovation Plan, so as to optimize the use of natural resources and reduce environmental impacts through innovation in products or services
5. Doubling the financing of business eco-innovation projects.
6. Spread extended producer responsibility (EPR) in accordance with the European Union's Waste Framework Directive and with the aim of extending reuse, recycling and recovery of waste.

CLIMATE CHANGE

EUROPE: The EU has committed to ambitious international and EU climate action, having ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change on October 5, 2016. The objectives of the EU, in its proposal for the European Climate Law, are to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 20% by 2020 and by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. As a long-term objective, the EU aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, as part of the required efforts of developed countries as a group. Adapting to the adverse effects of climate change is crucial to mitigate its already visible effects and improve preparedness and resilience to future impacts.

In November 2018, the Commission presented its long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy by 2050[18]. The EU's energy policies aim to ensure a secure, competitive and affordable energy supply while still meeting its climate change targets.

New targets for 2030 have been agreed:

- a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels (20% in 2020);
- at least 32% of consumed energy comes from renewable energy sources (20% in 2020);
- a 32.5% increase in energy efficiency compared to the current situation (20% in 2020);
- an objective of electrical interconnection of 10% by 2020, with the aim of reaching 15% by 2030.

In March 2020, the Commission proposed a **European Climate Law**[19]. This Law sets the ambitious target of achieving a net zero greenhouse gas emissions level in the EU by 2050, as well as a framework to achieve this climate neutrality goal. The path towards climate neutrality demands sector-wide measures, necessitating a shift in our approach to energy generation and food production, as well as rethinking our consumption patterns, work practices, and transportation methods.

In December 2020, the European Council agreed to increase the 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets from 40% to 55% compared to 1990 values.

The latest data for Europe[20] indicate that greenhouse gas emissions continue decreasing in absolute terms, per capita and per generated euro in the economy. Furthermore, it highlights that most sectors have reduced emissions over the past three decades, with the notable exception of transport, where demand has outweighed the benefits of climate policy. Many factors and policies have contributed to reducing emissions, but much faster reductions will be needed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Integrated policies and sustainable green investments are key to achieving long-term climate objectives.

In the context of the State, in May of this year 2020, at the proposal of the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, the Council of Ministers sent to the Parliament the first draft of the Climate Change and Energy Transition Law[21], currently under discussion in the Congress of Deputies after a period of amendments. In response to the climate emergency, Spain has set a target of achieving a 23% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030 in its National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) for 2021-2030. And the roadmap established in the Long-Term Decarbonisation Strategy (ELP 2050) will allow for a 90%

[18] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0773&from=EN

[19] Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the framework to achieve climate neutrality ('European Climate Law')

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0080&from=ES

[20] Trends and drivers of EU greenhouse gas emissions. EEA May 2020 https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/trends-and-drivers-of-eu-ghg

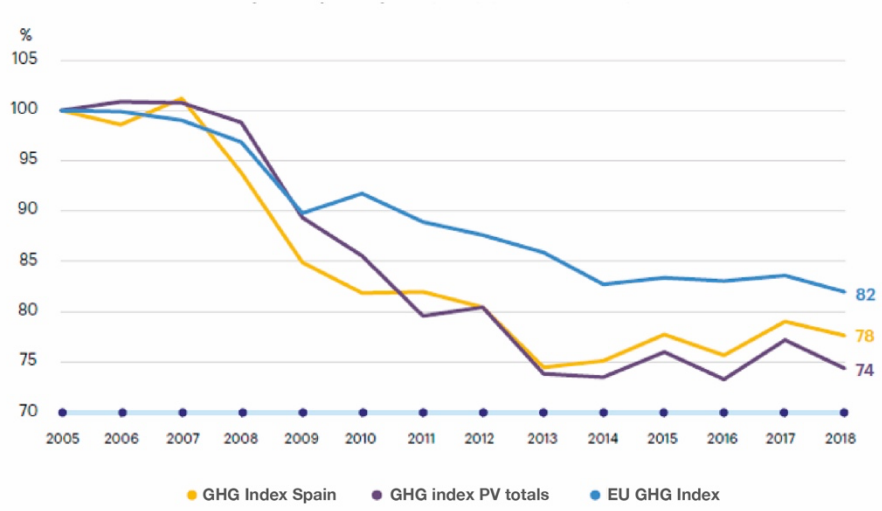
[21] Draft Law on Climate Change and Energy Transition https://www.miteco.gob.es/en/prensa/proyectodeleydecambioclimaticoytransicionenergetica_tcm30-509256.pdf

reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2050 compared to 1990. The remaining 10% will be absorbed by carbon sinks.

Greenhouse gas emissions in the Basque Country

In 1990, the Basque Country emitted 20.8 million tons of CO2-equivalent, 25.5 million in 2005 and 18.9 million in 2018. Compared to 2005, emissions have decreased by 26% and 9% compared to 1990. In the Soil Use, Soil-Use Change and Forestry sector there has been a fixed absorption of 1.9 million tonnes[22].

Figure 6. Evolution rate of greenhouse gas emissions (Year 2005=100)



Source: Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment Basque Government 2020

Emissions from regulated sectors, that is, those within the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS) regulations (mainly the energy sector and energy-intensive industrial sectors), decreased emissions by 46% in 2018 compared to 2005, the first year of operation of this system.

Diffuse emissions, those emitted by sectors not regulated by the previous regulations (waste, residential, services, transportation, unregulated industry, etc.), amount to 10.1 million tons and have decreased by 11% since 2005.

In the Basque Country Inventory 2018, transport contributes 34% of total emissions, industry 29%, energy transformation 13%, residential sector 9%, services 7%, waste 4%, and agriculture 3%. Transport is the only sector with an increase in its emissions compared to 2005 (+15%). Industry has reduced by 38%, Agriculture -50%, Waste -37%, Services 0%, Energy -40% and Residential -4%.

The emissions intensity, that is, the emissions generated to produce one unit of GDP, has decreased by 36% compared to 2005 and by 52% compared to 1990. Our emissions intensity thus remains below the European average, in terms of purchasing parity.

The per capita emissions in the Basque Country for the year 2018 reached 8.7 tons per inhabitant (8.9 EU28). Since 2005, they have decreased by 28%, and by 12% since 1990. Our per capita emissions would be slightly below the EU-28 average for the first time.

[22] Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory of the Basque Country 2018. http://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/inventario-emisiones-gases-efecto-invernadero-pais-vasco-2018-2

Figure 7. Index of evolution of GHG emissions in the Basque Country by sector (Year 2005=100)

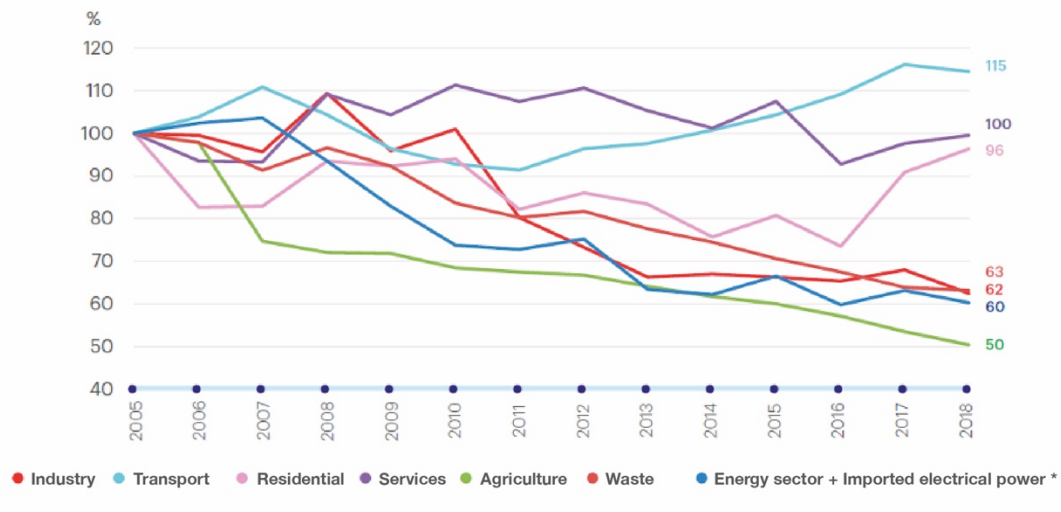
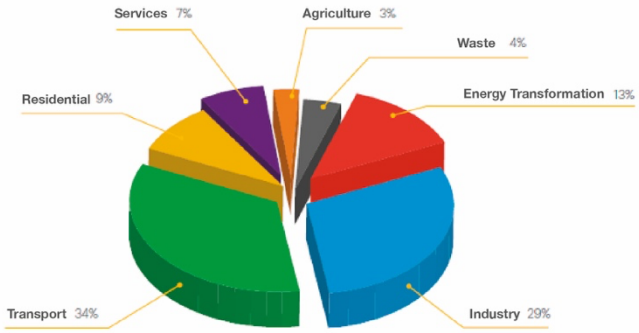


Figure 8. GHG emissions by sectors in the Basque Country in 2018 (Allocating to each sector the emission derived from electricity consumption)



Source: Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment Basque Government 2020

In 2015, the Basque Government approved the **Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country, "Klima 2050,"** and in 2016 **the Energy Strategy 2030**, assuming the principle of shared responsibility that governs international policies for emission reduction and energy transition.

The "Klima 2050" strategy sets a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels, and by 80% by 2050. Likewise, in 2050 it expects to achieve a renewable energy consumption of 40% on final consumption. Regarding adaptation, the objective is to ensure the resilience of the Basque territory to climate change.

On July 30, 2019, the Basque Government as a whole presented the "**Climate Emergency Declaration**", which aims to make this issue a central goal of the country. Based on the premise of "Think global, Act local," the Government of the Basque Country is committed to finding local solutions and responses to address this global priority. It reaffirms its conviction to lead this challenge and make it a lever for transformation towards a more competitive and climate-neutral economy. The Basque Government states its firm commitment to take into account the perspective of the impact of climate change in the design and implementation of all public policies. A new and more ambitious goal is set to "*advance towards a resilient and carbon-neutral economy by 2050*".

The total estimated budget by the Basque Government for climate change in 2016 was 84 million euros. This budget is the aggregation of the budgetary requirements of the set of sectoral actions of the climate policy. The estimated

operational budget for the proper implementation of the Strategy amounts to 439 million euros, distributed among the years of the 2020 Roadmap. These measures would generate 57 million euros of economic activity in the Basque Country, which would be associated with the creation of 1,030 total "gross" jobs each year for the next 5 years. The co-benefits of mitigation are relevant. The annual energy bill could be reduced by up to 55 million euros per year, which would help improve the competitiveness of companies. It is also estimated that the health damages avoided due to the reduction in air pollutants would range between 12 and 32 million euros per year.

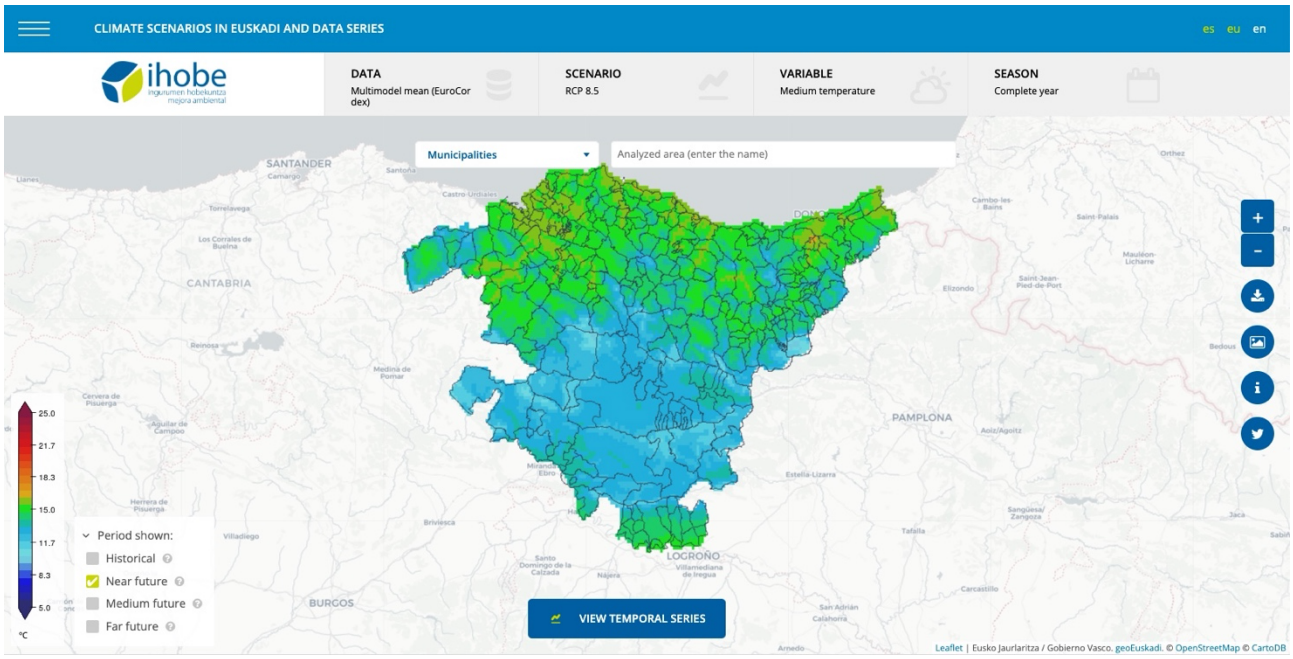
Figure 9. Evolution of GDP and GHG emissions in the Basque Country, base year 1995

Source: Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment Basque Government 2020

Climate scenarios for the Basque Country

In the Basque Country, the Climate Change Strategy, Klima2050, not only focuses on the necessary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions but also on adapting to climate change. One of its objectives is to ensure the resilience of the Basque territory to climate change. Ihobe, the Public Society of the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government, has published in 2020 a climate scenario viewer for the Basque Country, a virtual tool through which Basque public administrations and private entities can design adaptation actions to climate change[23].

Image 1. Climate scenarios



The development of climate scenarios allows us to understand the future behaviour of phenomena such as floods, droughts, heat waves, etc. and their impact on areas such as health, infrastructure, natural environment, economy, etc. The tool visualizes what the current climate is like, but also how it will be in the future in climate change scenarios, in different periods: 2011-2040; 2041-2070; 2071-2100. In addition to the variables related to climate projections and impacts, the climate scenario viewer developed by Ihobe allows the consultation of temperature and precipitation variables such as maximum, minimum and average temperatures, heat waves, tropical nights, average precipitation, heavy precipitation and dry days.

It analyses and extracts information through searches in specific areas, a particular municipality, a neighbourhood, in agricultural areas, areas of environmental interest. For the elaboration of these high-resolution scenarios, the international scenarios of the Euro-Cordex initiative are used, with a resolution of 12.5 kilometres, for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 scenarios, described in the latest AR5 report of the IPCC. These scenarios have been brought to a 1 km resolution bias correction methods.

[23] http://escenariosklima.ihobe.eus/

Priority actions on Climate Change in the Basque Country

7. Legislation on climate change and energy transition, as well as a strategy or action plan for climate neutrality by 2050.
8. Create a Social pact on energy transition towards a more sustainable and low carbon model for the Basque Country.
9. Promote projects that maximise energy efficiency in industry and zero-emission buildings.
10. It is necessary to accelerate the reduction of particle emissions (PM2.5 and PM10), among other measures through the promotion of cleaner energy production and efficient and non-polluting urban heating.
11. Promote sustainable mobility plans at regional and municipal levels, as well as aid for low-emission means of transport.
12. It is necessary to intensify adaptation efforts, since with adequate measures to prevent or minimize the damage that climate change can cause, significant economic and social benefits are obtained.
13. At the local and regional level, it is necessary to promote green infrastructure projects and nature-based solutions for adaptation to climate change, as well as to promote integrated energy and climate plans.

2. PROTECT, PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN NATURAL CAPITAL

NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

EUROPE: The new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030[24] aims to ensure that Europe's biodiversity is on a path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate, and our economy. Establishes new ways of more effectively applying legislation, and sets new commitments, measures, objectives, and governance mechanisms. It proposes a far-reaching EU Nature Recovery Plan. It demands the full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives to achieve a good conservation status of the protected species and habitats. It also needs the agricultural and forestry sectors to contribute to maintain and improve biodiversity.

The report on the global biodiversity situation prepared for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)[25], sponsored by the United Nations, indicates that nature and its fundamental contributions to people, which together incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions, are deteriorating worldwide.

As a result of human activity, the global population of wild species has declined by 60% over the past 40 years. Approximately 1 million species have been at risk of extinction for a few decades. The main drivers of this loss are the transformation of natural habitats into agricultural land and the expansion of urban areas. Other causes include overexploitation of natural resources (such as overfishing and destructive agricultural practices), climate change, pollution, and invasive exotic species. In the coming decades, we are on track to lose one in eight species inhabiting the planet, 10% of insects, and 25% of other animals and plants.

Current trajectories do not allow to achieve the objectives for conserving and sustainably using nature, nor to achieve sustainability, and the objectives for 2030 will only be feasible through transformational changes in the economic, social, political, and technological spheres.

The new **European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** sets goals to protect and effectively manage at least 30% of land and 30% of sea areas. Starting from the existing Natura 2000 areas, the objective is to complete them with protected areas, ensuring strict protection of areas with high biodiversity and climate value. The Strategy proposes a far-reaching EU Nature Recovery Plan.

This Strategy highlights that biodiversity loss and climate change are interdependent. Climate change is the third major cause of biodiversity loss, and this loss of biodiversity, in turn, has negative repercussions on climate change. Instead of storing carbon in soils and biomass, the damaged ecosystems release it again into the atmosphere. Deforestation increases the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which causes climate disruptions and leads to further loss of biodiversity. Nature-based solutions, such as biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, are an excellent way to combat the effects of climate change and involve a very cost-effective use of resources. Recovering forests, soils, and wetlands, as well as creating green spaces in cities, is key to achieving the necessary mitigation of climate change before 2030.

[24] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380

[25] https://ipbes.net

Biodiversity in the Basque Country

The Basque Country is home to a great biodiversity. With just under 1% of the territory of the European Union, the Basque Country is home to approximately 35% of Europe's habitats of interest, 21% of fauna species, and 2% of flora species, including 14 habitats and 4 priority species for the continent. In Natura 2000 sites are located some of the most emblematic species of our natural heritage: amphibians like the southern frog; birds like the Spanish imperial eagle, the bearded vulture or the red kite; crustaceans like the common river crab; insects like the dragonfly; mammals like the forest bat, the Eurasian otter or the European mink; fish like the lamprey; or flowering plants such as sundews, the piedmont geranium, the white water lily or the wild olive.

Basque citizens enjoy an ancestral relationship with nature. For centuries, customs and practices that are integrated into Basque culture have given meaning to many of our traditions. Numerous legends and myths associated with nature and its elements such as Mari, Basajaun or the lamiak are part of those Special Conservation Areas in our canyons, rivers and springs. We venerate trees and even some animals from the rural world such as bats or bees have a spiritual significance. Until just over a century ago our village has been rural and seafaring.

Biodiversity strategy

The Basque Country´s commitment to nature has led to advances in habitat and species protection policies, as well as ecosystem conservation and restoration, over the past few decades. In this sense, in 2016 the **Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country 2030**[26] was launched, which sets priorities and commitments regarding Natural Heritage. This initiative establishes goals, objectives, and actions to promote the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of the natural heritage and biodiversity in the Basque Country. In the future, this Strategy may need to be completed, adapted or updated taking into account the results of its implementation and the updated frameworks at international and EU level.

The report “Diagnosis of Biodiversity in the Basque Country” [27], drafted within the framework of the elaboration of the Strategy, highlights the most relevant strengths and weaknesses.

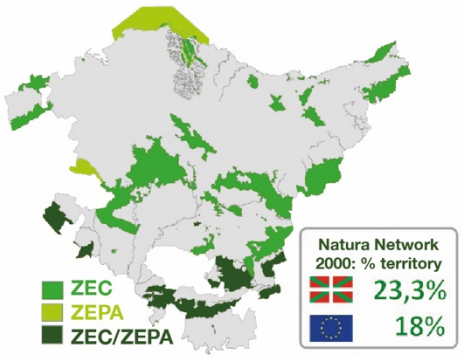
Establishing a coherent network of Natura 2000 sites

In the Basque Country, the Natura 2000 Network has 55 protected areas whose designation was completed with the approval in 2016 of the different management plans for the pending SACs. Thus, currently, the network is composed of 47 Special Conservation Areas (1,119 km^2), 4 Special Protection Areas for Birds (248 km^2), and 4 areas designated as both SAC and SPA (318 km^2), all of them with their own management plans. According to their surface area, the 55 protected areas in the Basque Country cover a total area of 1,685 km^2, which is equivalent to 23% of the total surface area of the Basque Country.

[26] https://www.euskadi.eus/documentacion/2016/estrategia-de-biodiversidad-de-la-comunidad-autonoma-del-pais-vasco-2030/web01-a2ingdib/es/

[27] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/biodiversidad2030/es_def/adjuntos/DIAGNOSTICO__Estrategia_biodiversidad.pdf

Image 2. Areas protected by the Natura 2000 Network in the Basque Country

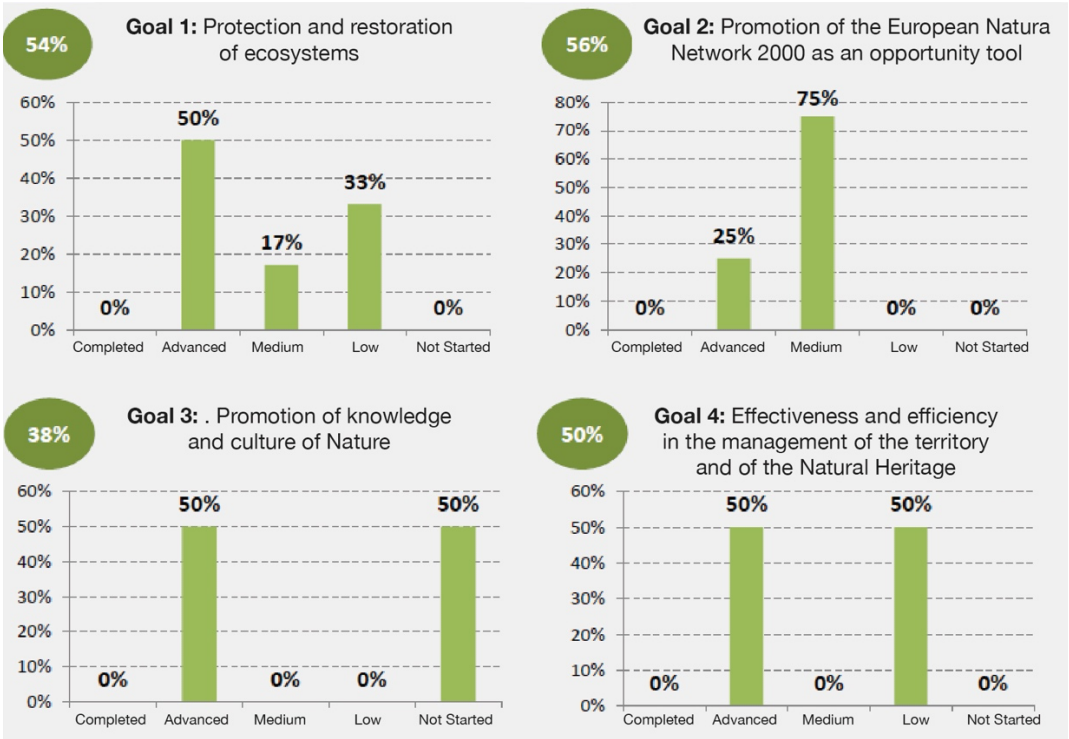


All Objectives and Measures documents for Red Natura 2000 sites have been developed. All Management Plans have been approved except for those of Aizkorri-Aratz and Aralar, which have measures pending approval by the Provincial Councils of Álava and Gipuzkoa.

Advances in maintaining or restoring a favourable conservation status of habitats and species.

In December 2019, the first "**Monitoring Report of the Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country"** was prepared, which collects the main advances generated in terms of conservation, knowledge, and governance in the field of natural heritage and biodiversity in the period 2016-2019. It reflects its results and progress in terms of compliance, existing obstacles and difficulties, and identifies key elements for decision-making for the updating and reorientation of future action plans. The degree of development of the actions, based on their objectives for 2019, is 60%. Therefore, about two thirds of the targets initially set for that period have been met. All the goals are above 50%, and the third one especially stands out with 71%.

Figure 10. Progress by Goals of the 2020 Action Plan of the Biodiversity Strategy



Regarding the **assessment and monitoring of the Natural Heritage** of the Basque Country, the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government has prepared, in 2019, the six-year report on compliance with the Habitats Directive (Article 17 - Evaluation of the EC of habitats and species). As complementary actions, it is important to highlight the specific monitoring of species carried out by the Nature Protection Service of the Basque Government in coordination with specialized agents (URA, Aranzadi, among others), as well as the specific fauna databases and studies available to the Provincial Councils.

Another of the most relevant developed actions is the **Review of the Basque Catalogue of Threatened Species**. In this sense, different proposals for cataloguing species (butterflies, nocturnal birds, wolves, etc.) have been developed. In addition, different Management Plans for species listed in the Basque Catalogue of Threatened Species are being prepared and processed (coastal and cliff flora, cave-dwelling bats, among others are some of the most recent examples).

MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION OF ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES

EUROPE: The EU biodiversity strategy aims to maintain and restore ecosystems and their services by including green infrastructure in land use planning, as well as restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020. The EU green infrastructure strategy promotes the integration of this infrastructure into related plans and programmes.

In relation to the promotion of **green infrastructure** as a tool for connectivity, it is important to note that this concept has been incorporated into the Territorial Planning Guidelines, approved by Decree 128/2019, of July 30th. As future Sector Territorial Plans and Partial Territorial Plans are developed, green infrastructure will be gradually implemented in territorial planning.

On the other hand, the UNESCO Chair, within the framework of the Assessment of Ecosystem Services in the Basque Country, has developed a "Green Infrastructure Map for the Basque Country" and indicators to quantify and map the distribution of ecosystem services provided by urban and peri-urban green areas (urban green infrastructure) in Bilbao.

It is important to highlight that the risks of climate change for the Natura 2000 Network in the Basque Country have been studied. This work has made it possible to obtain an estimate of the climate risk for a selection of 27 habitats of community interest and 13 habitats of regional terrestrial interest. A methodology has also been developed to determine the exposure of the habitats studied to climate change, and a KLIMATEK 2019 project has been launched for the identification and integrated analysis of potential climate refuges for biodiversity.

Finally, regarding the link between biodiversity and geodiversity, it is relevant to mention that for the first time, Geosites have been included in the 5 Plans for the Management of Natural Resources in Protected Natural Spaces that are currently being processed, giving them visibility and proper treatment.

Regarding the detection of invasive alien species and their new expansion zones, the Basque Government's Department of Environment participates in the **Early Warning Network** with the Ministry for Ecological Transition and carries out detection actions on multiple species (zebra mussel, Asian hornet, etc.). However, it should be noted that an integrated alert system for the Basque Country has not yet been developed.

Estimate of natural capital

The EU Biodiversity Strategy urged Member States to map and assess the state of ecosystems and their services in their territory by 2014, to calculate the economic value of these services, and to integrate this value into national and EU-level accounting and reporting systems by 2020.

In this line, the Action Plan for the year 2020 of the Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country pointed out in its Action 19: Analysis and definition of the economic model of the Natura 2000 network and implementation of economic, financial, and tax instruments to achieve the objectives of the network; and Action 20: Assessment of the effort and socio-economic result related to Natura 2000 Network.

As a fundamental document of the economic model of Natura 2000, the "Priority Action Framework for the financing of Natura 2000: diagnosis of the current situation and forecast 2021-2027"[28] has been developed to respond to Article 8 of the Habitats Directive. It is a document required by the European Union that includes an evaluation for the Basque Country of the investments made in the Natura 2000 network. In addition, the economic evaluation study of the Natura 2000 network in the Basque Country has been completed (report of results and associated economic database), and it will be published in 2021.

Regarding the economic tools implemented to achieve the objectives of the Network, the use of **Payments for Environmental Services** by the Provincial Council of Alava for the conservation of pastoral habitats and threatened species of flora and fauna stands out, which have contributed to improving the quality of management and socio-economic development. In addition to Payments for Environmental Services, the Basque Government has enabled "grants for financing active conservation actions of natural heritage included in land stewardship agreements" (2016) and "grants for local entities that carry out actions that promote sustainable development" (prioritizing Natura Network 2000 projects until 2018).

From the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development and Environmental Education at the University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU, the research project is being led: **Assessment of Ecosystem Services in the Basque Country**. As part of this project, different methods for assessing and valuing the services provided by terrestrial ecosystems have been developed, in order to establish priorities for their restoration and conservation. This, in turn, allows for the valuation of the socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural benefits of natural heritage.

In April 2020, the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability, and Environment of the Basque Government presented the **Priority Action Framework 2021-2027 in the Basque Country and financing of the Natura 2000 network**[29]**.**

The European Commission prepares a technical document, called the Priority Action Framework (PAF), before each programming period (the current one being 2014-2020), to identify the economic needs of the Natura 2000 network at the Union level. In 2019, the MAP for the period 2021-2027 was prepared. In the case of the Basque Country, this MAP document estimates that direct public expenditure on the Natura 2000 network in the Basque Country was around 128 million euros in the 2014-2020 period. And the one of 2021-2027 will reach a very similar figure, around 119 million euros.

In the period 2014-2020, 56% of the expenditure was covered by the Provincial Councils, 13% by the Basque Government, 5% by the General State Administration, and 26% by other entities, among which the Basque Water Agency stands out. About 12% of the expenditure was financed by the European Commission through various funds and instruments. The largest economic effort corresponded to management and monitoring actions in continental aquatic habitats (rivers and lakes), followed by forests and other tree formations.

The effort of the Basque taxpayer in the management of the Natura 2000 Network in Euskadi was about 17-18 million euros per year, but it is also estimated that the economic return impact of the Natura 2000 Network would be between 260 and 390 million euros per year and would help maintain more than 15,000 full-time jobs. This economic impact refers to benefits or cost reductions in areas such as carbon storage, mitigation of natural disasters, increase in food security, provision of recreational and tourism services, contribution and management of water resources, maintenance and regeneration of fisheries, improvements in public health, and services related to education, research and innovation.

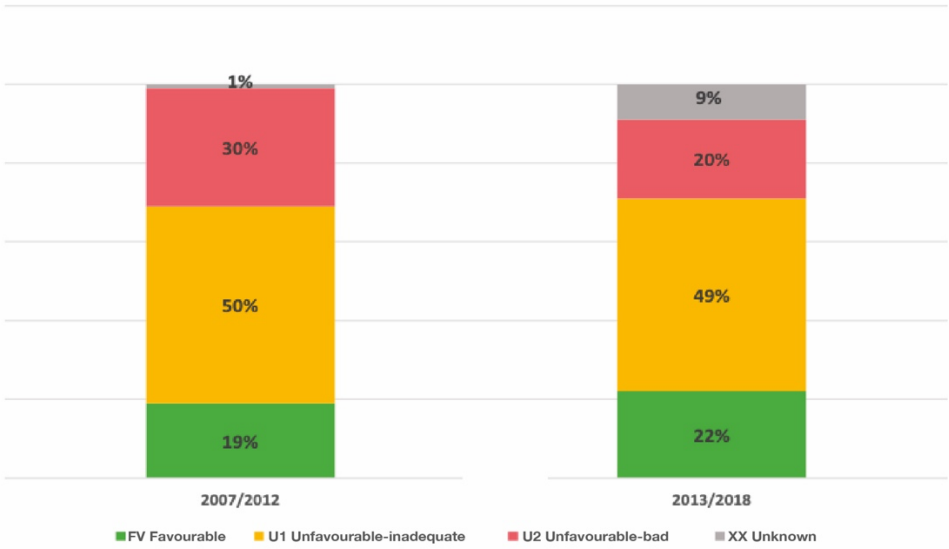
[28] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/evento/financiacion_natura2000/es_def/adjuntos/Presentaci%C3%B3n_MAP_Euro-parc_K+E_definitiva.pdf

[29] https://www.euskadi.eus/documentacion/2020/marco-accion-prioritaria-natura-2000/web01-a2inguru/es/

State of Nature in the Basque Country

In June 2020, the report on the state of nature in the Basque Country was presented in accordance with the EU Habitat Directive 2013-2018[30]. In relation to the overall conservation status of habitats, there has been a slightly positive trend in the last decade. However, of the 116 habitats defined as SCI (Sites of Community Importance) or SRI (Sites of Regional Importance), 69% are rated as unfavourable.

Figure 11. Evolution of the global preservation status of habitats in the Basque Country



Source: "The State of Nature in the Basque Country"[31]

Priority actions in Nature and Biodiversity in the Basque Country

14. Promote Nature-Based Solutions instrument with actions that rely on ecosystems and services they provide to respond to challenges such as climate change, food security or disaster risk.
15. Promote economic biodiversity studies related to the primary sector and implement payment instruments for sustainable management, mainly in forestry and agricultural sectors.
16. Add biodiversity measures in agriculture, including organic/ecological agriculture targets, reduction of pesticide use, etc.
17. Creation of the Program to support urban green infrastructure initiatives: networks of green spaces, connectivity in planning, trees, maps of Nature, etc.

[30] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/estadonaturaleza/es_def/adjuntos/estado_naturaleza_Euskadi.pdf

[31] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/estadonaturaleza/es_def/adjuntos/estado_naturaleza_Euskadi.pdf

SOIL PROTECTION

EUROPE: The EU Thematic Strategy for soil Protection stresses the need to ensure sustainable soil use. This involves preventing further soil degradation and preserving its functions, as well as restoring degraded soils. The 2011 Roadmap towards a resource efficient Europe states that, no later than 2020, EU policies should take into account their direct and indirect impact on soil use.

Soil is a finite, extremely fragile and increasingly degraded resource in the European Union. In 2006 the "Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection"[32] was published but this has not been developed into a framework directive and therefore there is currently no common European policy to regulate and set the direction for soil protection. As a result, the conservation obligations of this resource are scattered across multiple sector policies. This Strategy states that "*Soil is essentially a non-renewable resource consisting of a highly dynamic system that performs many functions and provides vital services for human activities and the survival of ecosystems. The available information indicates that in recent decades, there has been a significant increase in soil degradation, and there is evidence that this trend will continue if measures are not taken."*

Productive land and fertile soil are part of our shared natural capital. Proper management of soil by owners and users is essential for the sustainable use of this resource and the provision of ecosystem services. These services include the provision of food, nutrient cycling, support for all terrestrial biodiversity, regulation and purification of water, and mitigation of climate change through carbon sequestration. While the global demand for food and pressures on land and soil are increasing, biodiversity is visibly decreasing[33].

The European Environment Agency acknowledges that soil degradation is not well monitored and is often hidden. Intensive land management can lead to negative impacts on soil biodiversity, which is a key driver of carbon cycling in terrestrial ecosystems and nutrient cycling. There is increasing evidence that land and soil degradation have significant economic consequences, while the cost of preventing damage is significantly lower. The lack of a coherent policy framework for soil protection in Europe can limit the ability to achieve future goals related to the development of green infrastructure and the bioeconomy[34]..

Soil protection in the Basque Country

The Basque Country drafted in 1994 the pioneering Master Plan for Soil Protection which designed and promoted the first actions within this field. Law 3/1998, the General Environmental Protection Law of the Basque Country, includes a chapter dedicated to soil protection and another chapter on contaminated soils. Although generally speaking, this rule laid the first legal foundations for the fight against soil pollution. The general objectives of soil protection policy in the Basque Country are to:

- Prevent the occurrence of new alterations in soils;
- Provide solution to the most urgent cases;
- Plan medium and long-term solutions for inherited liabilities in the form of contaminated soils.

Currently, the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability, and Environment of the Basque Government is carrying out a planning process related to the soil resource, which will result in a new **2030 Soil Protection Strategy for the Basque Country.** For the first time, this Strategy comprehensively addresses the protection of this resource, addressing aspects such as erosion, pollution, artificialization, nutrient imbalances, landslides, etc.

The Basque Country is a small territory, with an area of 722,945 hectares. A significant portion of the soil is dedicated to agricultural, livestock, rural or forestry activities. In addition, 22.6% of the surface is protected. The

[32] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006PC0232&from=ES

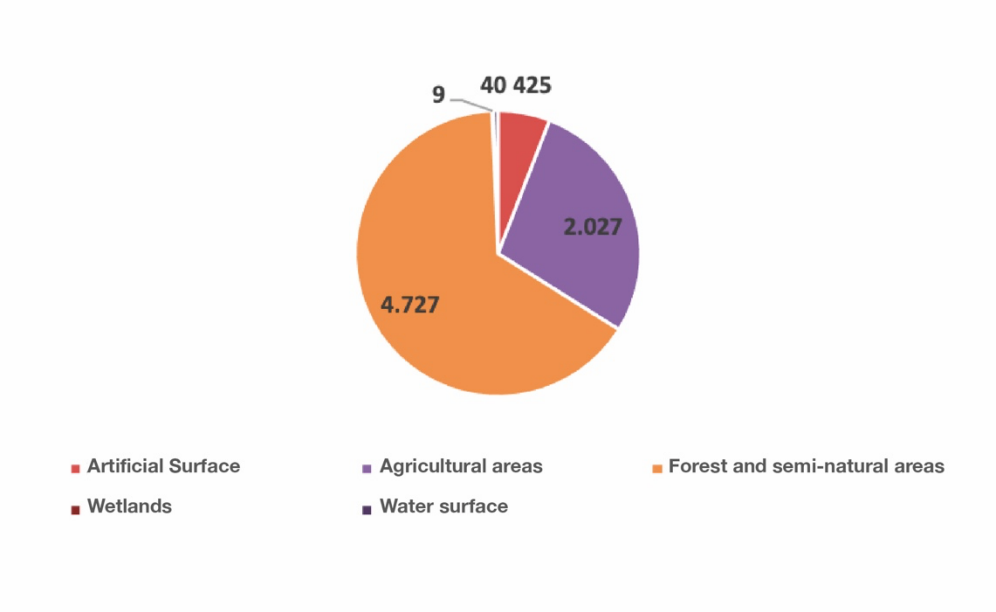
[33] UNEP, 2014; IPBES, 2018

[34] SOER 2020, EEA https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2020

space designated for urban uses (residential, economic activities, infrastructure and facilities) represents approximately 6% of the surface area.

The following graph shows the distribution of the main land cover types in the Basque Country, highlighting that 65% are forests and semi-natural areas, 28% are agricultural areas, and 6% are artificial surfaces.

Figure 12. Soil cover in the Basque Country (KM^2)



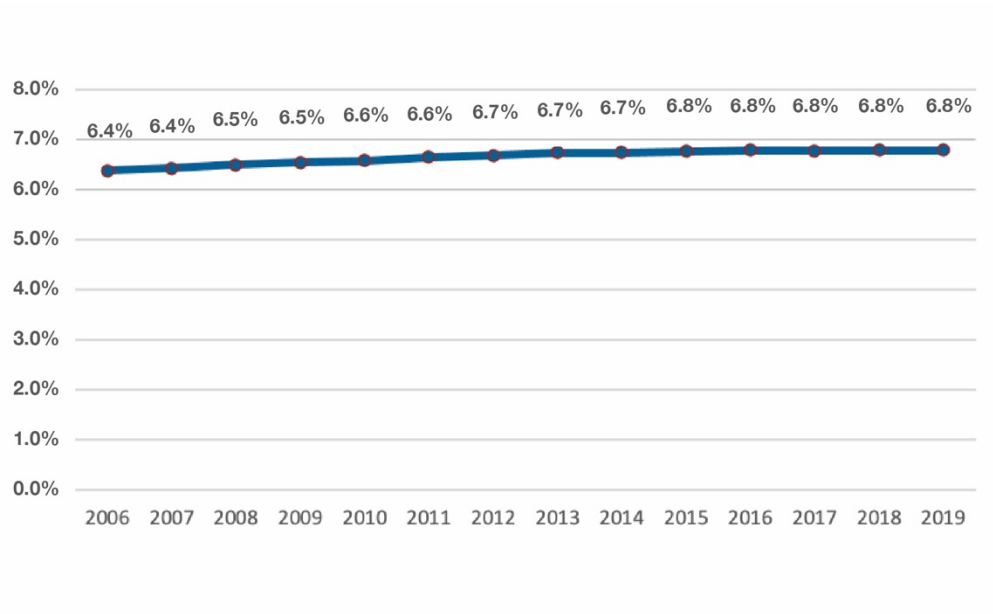
Source: European Environment Agency, EEA 202035

[35] https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/dashboards/land-cover-and-change-statistics

Soil artificialization

The percentage of artificial land surface can be considered as an indicator of the relative pressure on nature and biodiversity, as well as the environmental pressure on people living in urban areas. Another indicator in this regard is population density. The Basque Country is above the EU average in terms of artificial soil area, with 6.8% (EU average: 4.4%). The population density is 302 inhabitants/km^2, a percentage that is also above the EU average (118 inhabitants/km^2).

Figure 13. % artificial soil in the Basque Country



Source. Eustat 2020

Contaminated soils

Pollution can significantly reduce soil quality and threaten human health or the environment. In 1994, the Ihobe Public Society of the Basque Government published the first methodological guidelines for soil pollution investigation and finalized the publication of one of the main tools for the management of contaminated soils: the inventory of soils that support or have supported potentially soil-contaminating activities or facilities. The inventory, in addition to identifying and locating these soils, allowed for the magnitude of the problem to be assessed. The first version of the inventory was published in 2001, and currently, the inventory is a freely accessible tool through the GeoEuskadi spatial data infrastructure[36].

The Law 1/2005, for the prevention and correction of soil pollution in the Basque Country, was the main regulatory tool in this matter as it defined for the first time three key elements for the functioning of the contaminated soil policy:

1. The listing of potentially soil-polluting activities.
2. The indicative evaluation values - B (VIE-B) as soil quality standards.
3. The procedure for declaring soil quality.

The Law 1/2005 was replaced by Law 4/2015, for the prevention and correction of soil pollution. The reduction of administrative intervention, simplification, and the principle of non-tutelage when it is not necessary and as long as environmental standards are strictly maintained, are its core concepts. During the period between the publication

[36] www.geo.euskadi.eus

of both laws, contaminated land policy in the Basque Country was governed by the Plan for Contaminated Land of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country 2007-2012[37].

Potentially contaminated soils

In the Basque Country, with a strong industrial past, it is not surprising that these facilities are precisely the ones that predominate among the set of potentially soil-polluting activities. According to the most recent data, the inventoried plots in the Basque Country reach the number of 12,448. The total area they occupy, 9,642 hectares, represents 1.3% of the total area and 19% of the sum of the areas classified as urbanized and urbanizable.

	Potentially contaminated soils	Recovered soils
European Union	650,000*	65,500
Spain	43,092	157
Basque Country	12,448	1,031

* Only those registered in inventories are collected, but the estimate is that there are a total of 2.5 million potentially contaminated sites in Europe[38]

Source: European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and EUSTAT, 2020

The number of sites where waste disposal activity (landfills) has been the cause of their inclusion in the inventory amounts to 1,720. While these landfills account for 25% of the total potentially contaminated area, the remaining 75% is occupied by industrial activities.

Image 3. Density of potentially contaminated sites per km² of urbanized land.

Source: GeoEuskadi and Status of local soil contamination in Europe; JRC, 2018.

The contaminants most frequently detected in both soil and groundwater are those considered within the groups of total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) and heavy metals, which appear in 61% of soils and 59% of associated groundwater. The presence of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, with a contribution to soil contamination of 19% and 14% to water contamination, is related to the type of industrial activities developed in the Basque Country.

A special consideration that will need to be given is the 159 hectares of potentially contaminated land located within the boundaries of Natura 2000 European Network areas, with 99 hectares corresponding to dumping areas and the rest to industrial plots.

[37] Basque Country Contaminated Soils Plan 2007-2012 https://www.ingurumena.ejgv.euskadi.eus/r49-orokorra/en/contenidos/plan/suelos_contaminados/en_plan/adjuntos/plan_suelos_contaminados.pdf

[38] Status of local soil contamination in Europe: Revision of the indicator "Progress in the management contaminated sites in Europe" 2018 https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/status-local-soil-contamination-europe-revision-indicator-progress-management-contaminated-sites

Other threats to soil quality

The Basque Country is a territory with a very high susceptibility to landslides due to its steep slopes. More than 90% of the Historical Territory of Gipuzkoa, 75% of Bizkaia and 50% of Álava have slopes of more than 15%. An increase in landslides is expected due to the increase in extreme rainfall due to global warming and greater human influence (construction of roads and highways, urbanization in high slope areas or deforestation of hillsides and embankments).

On the other hand, compared to other regions of the Cantabrian Cornice, the organic carbon content in the soil is lower in the Basque Country. Traditional land uses and, in particular, forest management can be a key factor in controlling the storage of organic carbon in soils. In recent years, a trend towards soil carbon loss has been observed, and in the current context of climate change, there is great uncertainty associated with soil carbon response. Some simulation models predict that climate change will lead to significant additional releases of carbon from soils and vegetation, while others suggest that the changes will be relatively small.

Priority actions in soil protection in the Basque Country

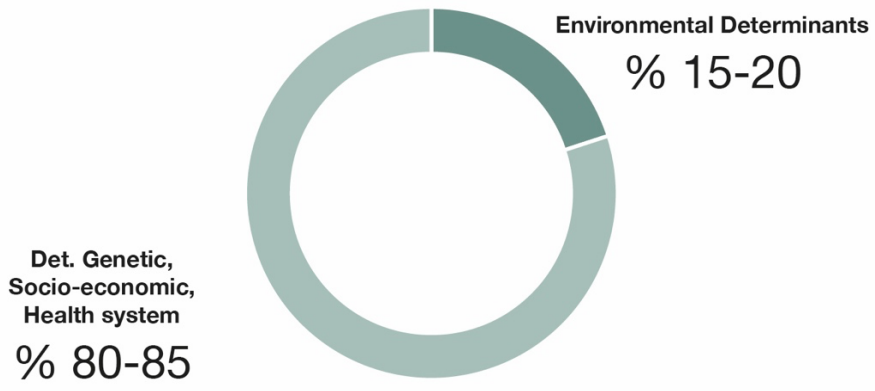
18. Approval of a comprehensive soil protection strategy that, in the section on potentially contaminated soils, sets priorities for action and recovery based on risks to human health and the environment.

19. Effective integration of soil protection into rural development planning.

20. Advances in knowledge based on indicators of the evolution of the main soil threats in the Basque Country.

3. GUARANTEE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF CITIZENS LIFE

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the mortality burden in Europe due to environmental determinants ranges from 15 to 20%[39].



The competent Departments in Health and Environment of the Basque Government have jointly promoted, in collaboration with the University of the Basque Country, a study called “Environmental Determinants of Health in the Basque Country (**DAS 2020 Report**)". This report analyzes for the first time the environmental determinants to which the population of the Basque Country is exposed, and to the extent possible, describes the health impact generated by this exposure.

The DAS 2020 report defines 18 indicators and concludes that, in general, the results are satisfactory for most indicators. However, some factors require thorough monitoring (such as air quality and noise levels) to comply with existing regulations, and in other cases, there is a need to improve the degree of knowledge, both on environmental determinants (chemical substances) and their relationship and impact on human health (biomonitoring).

In general, it is concluded that it is necessary to establish work protocols that allow for the interrelation of existing environmental information (monitoring networks for air, water and noise quality) with available health data in order to evaluate and quantify the impact on health that this generates.

[39] World Health Organization, WHO, 2016. Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments. A global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks.

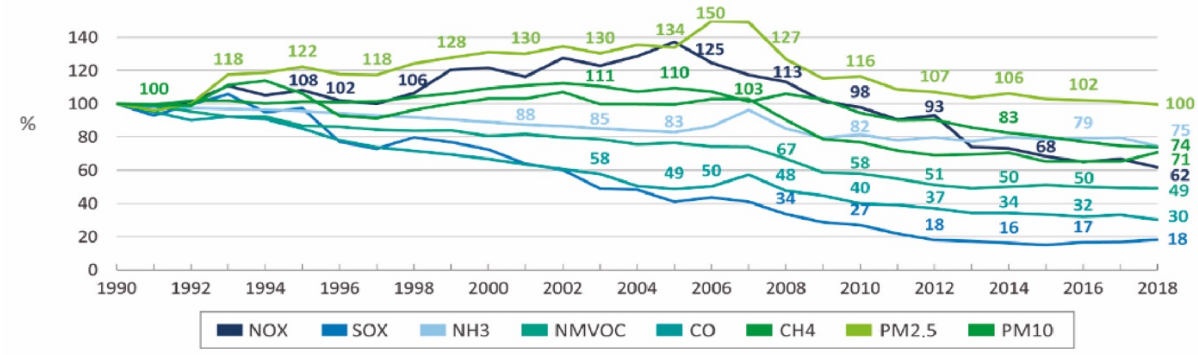
AIR QUALITY AND NOISE

EUROPE: The EU's policy and legislation on clean air require a significant improvement in air quality in the EU to bring it closer to the level of quality recommended by the World Health Organization. Further reduction of air pollution and its impacts on human health, ecosystems, and biodiversity should be achieved, with the long-term goal of not exceeding critical loads and levels. This requires redoubling efforts to fully comply with EU legislation on air quality and establish strategic measures and goals for after 2020.

The EU has developed a wide legislative corpus on air quality[40], which establishes health-based standards and objectives for a range of air pollutants. Air pollution, understood as a global issue, harms human health and the environment. At the community level, there is legislation in place to achieve long-term air pollution and air quality goals that avoid unacceptable effects and risks to human health and the environment.

Similarly to Europe, most of the emissions of various pollutants have significantly decreased in the Basque Country. The implementation on the ground of all the regulatory legislation on air pollution by the Basque Government is carried out through tools such as Integrated Environmental Authorizations for IPPC activities, regularizations of sources for potentially atmospheric polluting activities, activity licenses or inspection plans.

Figure 14. Evolution of total emissions of the main air pollutants in the Basque Country 1990-2018



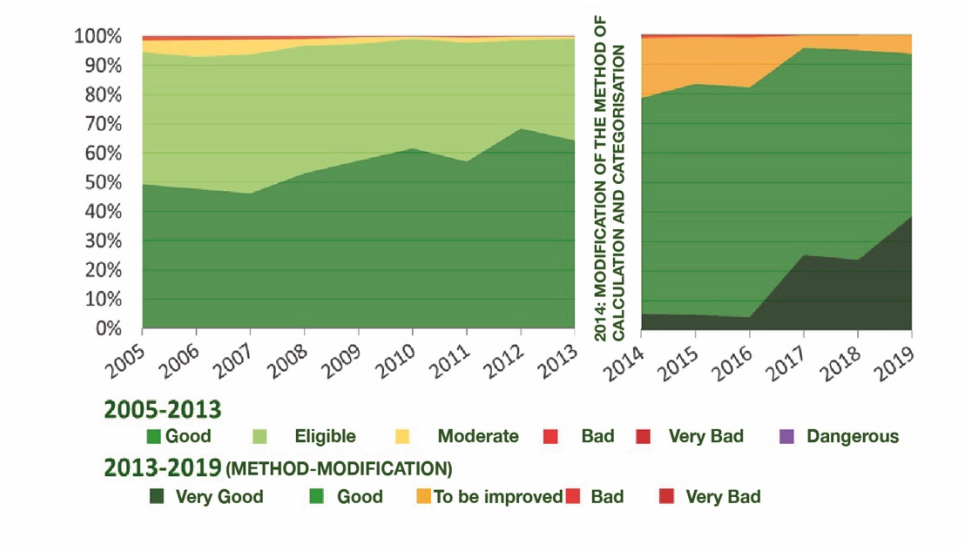
Source. Basque Government Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment

Taking 1990 as a starting point, the data from 2018 shows a general decrease in emissions of the main air pollutants. During the analysed period, the emissions of pollutants such as sulphur oxides, carbon monoxide, and non-metallic volatile organic compounds show significant reductions (-82%, -70%, and -51%, respectively). The decrease in emissions of other pollutants, although lower, remains significant. Thus, nitrogen oxides, particles smaller than 10 microns, methane, and ammonia have been reduced by around 25-38% compared to 1990. Finally, particles smaller than 2.5 microns, despite showing the same levels as in 1990, show a continued decline from the historical maximum experienced in 2006.

Despite the reduction in emissions, additional efforts are needed to meet the commitments in this regard (compared to emission levels in 2005) established in the new National Emissions Ceiling Directive for 2020-2029 and for any year from 2030 onwards.

[40] Air quality standards https://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/standards.htm

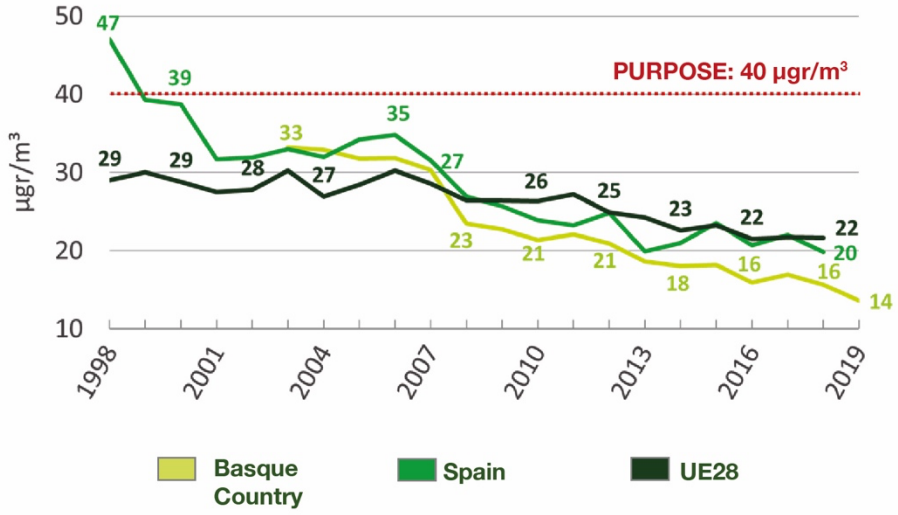
Figure 15. Evolution of the percentage of days per year according to air quality in the Basque Country



Source. Basque Government Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment

Air quality data in the Basque Country has significantly improved between 2005 and 2016, with the percentage of days with good air quality increasing from 50% in 2005 to 93% in 2019, including both good and very good air quality. This past year, the days with Poor or Very Poor air quality disappeared, with the rest (17%) being of Moderate quality.

Figure 16. Average annual concentration of particulate matter (PM_{10}) to which urban population is exposed



Source. Basque Government Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment

The average annual concentration of particulate matter (PM_{10}) in the Basque Country shows a decrease of 39% during the period 2008-2019. This reduction meets the general trend for the period 1998-2014 for both the EU28 as a whole and Spain, with decreases of 15.4% and 26%, respectively. It should be noted that each and every one of the records relating to the average annual concentration of particulate matter in the Basque Country meets the objective set by the European Council Framework Directive 2008/50/EC on air quality, which should not exceed the limit value of 40 µg/m3 per year for PM_{10}.

This good evolution in the Basque Country in terms of both the main air pollutants and air quality does not mean that there is no problem regarding health. It is necessary to accelerate the reduction of particulate emissions ($PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10}), mainly in urban areas, among other measures by promoting cleaner energy production and efficient and non-polluting district heating. The previously mentioned **DAS Basque Report 2020 report** states that the percentage of the population exposed to outdoor air pollution above the established regulatory limits is almost negligible (1.77% for NO_2 and 0.04% for O_3). However, the percentage of population in the Basque Country exceeding the limits recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), is 11.7% in PM_{10}, 1.8% in NO_2 and 12% in O_3. There are insufficient data to estimate $PM_{2.5}$ exposure.

Therefore, air quality in the Basque Country continues to be a cause for concern. The European Environment Agency has estimated the following data for Europe and Spain:

Table 2. Premature deaths attributed to the exposure to $PM_{2.5}$, NO_2 and O_3 in the EU-28, 2016[41]

	$PM_{2.5}$	**NO_2**	**O_3**
EU 28	374,000	68,000	14,000
Spain	24,100	7,700	1,500
Basque Country*	***1,148***	***367***	***71***

Source: European Environment Agency

* Preliminary estimate for the Basque Country based on population.

Premature deaths are those that occur before a person reaches the expected age. This life expectancy is typically the expected lifespan of a country stratified by sex. Premature deaths are considered preventable if their causes can be eliminated. In the Basque Country, based on a preliminary and indicative estimation of the population, around 1,148 cases of premature death could be attributed to fine particle concentrations, 367 to nitrogen dioxide concentrations, and 71 to ozone concentration.

Similarly to what has happened in Europe, in the Basque Country, the **reduction of $PM_{2.5}$ fine particle emissions** in recent years has been comparatively less significant than other emissions, despite being the pollutant that poses the greatest threat to human health. It has been estimated that in Europe, 54% of premature deaths caused by $PM_{2.5}$ could be avoided if current policies are fully implemented by the year 2030[42].

[41] https://www.eea.europa.eu//publications/air-quality-in-europe-2019

[42] SOER 2020, https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/soer-2020/chapter-08_soer2020-air-pollution/view

Noise

The main source of environmental noise in Europe is road traffic; nearly 100 million Europeans are exposed to traffic noise levels above 55dB, and 32 million of them are exposed to levels above 65dB. According to the European Environment Agency, one in 8 people living in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants is exposed at night to noise levels higher than 55db. The European Union has estimated the health impact generated by exposure to noise; 14.7 million adults experience annoyance from noise, 6.1 million suffer from sleep disturbance, 72,000 hospital admissions and 16,600 premature deaths are identified each year[43].

As part of the effort to combat noise pollution, the EU has established a common approach to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of exposure to environmental noise. This approach is based on the use of common methods to map noise, the provision of information to the public, and the adoption and implementation of action plans adapted to the local level.

The Decree 213/2012 on noise pollution in the Basque Country requires the construction of maps of total environmental noise (sum of all partial maps; street traffic, road traffic, railway and industry) to obtain the following exposure indicators: Ld for day, Le for evening, Ln for night, and the total, Lden. The estimation of exposure to environmental noise is carried out at a height of 4 meters on the facades of buildings. According to the Decree, all municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants should have an environmental noise map by now, as it requires them to do so within a period of 5 years from its publication.

Table 3. Population exposed to noise above target values (Decree 213/2012)

	Target values	
	Lden (65db)	**Ln (55db)**
Araba	11%	11%
Bizkaia	22%	24%
Gipuzkoa	14%	16%
Basque Country	**17%**	**19%**

Source. DAS Report 2020. Departments of Health and Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment of the Basque Government

According to the previous table, it can be observed that 17% of the population in Euskadi is exposed during the entire day (Lden) to noise levels above the limit value established by Decree 312/2012, and 19% of the population during the night (Ln). In the EU as a whole, according to WHO data, 20% of people are exposed to levels above 65dB throughout the day, and 30% above 55dB at night[44].

Regarding exposure to noise from road traffic, almost 60% of the population in the urban areas of the Basque capitals are exposed to more than 55db during the day. During the night in Vitoria-Gasteiz and Donostia-San Sebastián, the percentage of the population exposed to more than 50db is 34%, while in Bilbao it is 56%.

On the other hand, the Basque Country Health Survey (ESCAV) 2018[45] highlights that 21% of the population perceives a medium or high level of outdoor environmental noise around their home. This percentage would be 17% for the EU (28).

[43] Blanes N, Fons J, Houthuijs D, Swart W, Sáinzde la Maza M, Ramos MJ et al. (2017). Noise in Europe 2017: updated assessment. Bilthoven: European Topic Centre on Air Pollution and Climate Change Mitigation

[44] http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/noise/data-and-statistics (December, 2018)

[45] https://www.euskadi.eus/gobierno-vasco/salud-poblacional/inicio/

WATER QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

EUROPE: The legislation and policy of the EU require significant reduction in the impact of pressures on transitional, coastal, and freshwater (including surface and groundwater) waters. Achieving, maintaining, or improving a good status of water bodies, as defined in the Water Framework Directive, will allow the citizens of the EU to enjoy safe and good quality drinking water and bathing waters. This Directive will also ensure that the nutrient cycle (nitrogen and phosphorus) is managed in a more sustainable and resource efficient manner.

Protecting water resources, freshwater and marine ecosystems, drinking water, and bathing waters is an important component of environmental protection in Europe. The current legislation of the EU on water[46] establishes a protection framework in order to apply strict standards to all bodies of water in the EU and deals with specific sources of pollution (for example, agriculture, urban areas, and industrial activities). It also requires that the forecasts on the impacts of climate change be taken into account in the corresponding planning instruments, such as flood risk management plans and river basin management plans, and particularly in the program of measures that includes the actions that the Member States plan to take to achieve environmental objectives.

According to the European Commission's assessment,[47] much remains to be done to fully achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and other related Directives. In order to meet these objectives, it is essential to increase investments. EU funds will continue supporting these implementation efforts. While a large majority of groundwater bodies have achieved a good status, this is the case for less than half of surface water bodies. However, the trends for several of the underlying substances and quality elements are more positive.

Climate change is an increasing threat to European waters. Compliance with EU water legislation is already helping to manage the effects of a changing climate in the face of increased frequency of droughts and floods. The EU water policy has significant potential to mitigate climate change, provided that effective measures are taken promptly.

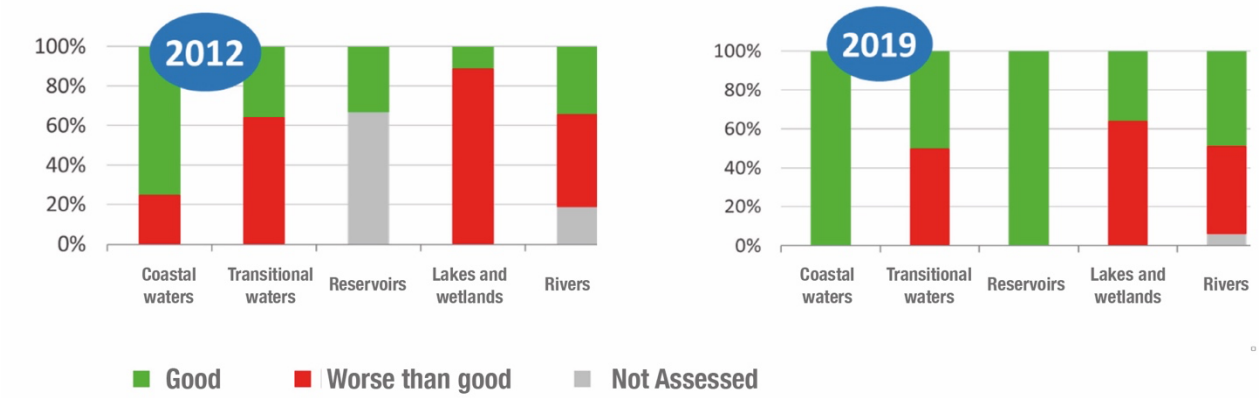
In the Basque Country, the Law 1/2006 on Water[48], known as the Basque Water Law, establishes the mechanisms for implementing the guidelines set by the Framework Directive. This alignment with Europe, combined with the creation of the Basque Water Agency-URA (the central instrument responsible for managing the functions that the Basque Water Law attributes in the field of water) and the significant efforts made by administrations and sectors involved to improve, among others, the conditions of wastewater discharges, has only improved the state of water bodies in the Basque Country significantly in recent decades.

[46] Within this framework, there are the Bathing Water Directive (Directive 2006/7/EC), the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Directive 91/271/EEC) (on the discharge of municipal and some industrial wastewater), the Drinking Water Directive (Directive 98/83/EC) (on the quality of water intended for human consumption), the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC) (on the management of water resources), the Nitrate Directive (Directive 91/676/EEC), and the Floods Directive (Directive 2007/60/EC).

[47] Review of the application of environmental legislation in 2019.. https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/EN/COM-2019-149-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF

[48] https://www.uragentzia.euskadi.eus/legislacion-de-aguas/normativa-general/u81-0003151/es/

Figure 17. Evolution of the global state of surface water bodies in the Basque Country 2012-2019



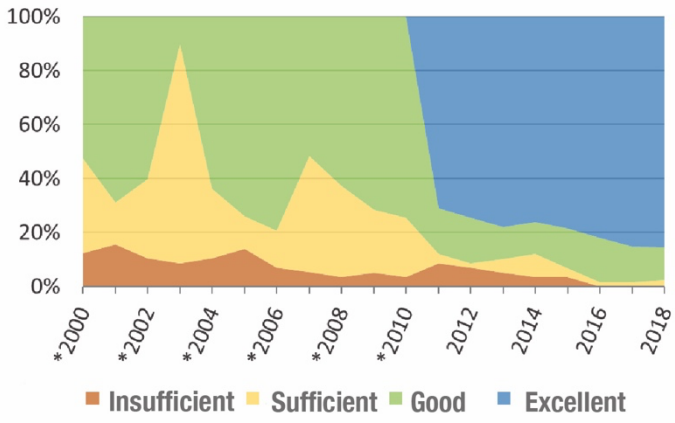
Source. Basque Water Agency. Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government.

According to data from 2019, out of the 174 **surface water** bodies present in the Basque Country, 52% showed an overall "good" status. The remaining ones did not reach the required value and obtained the rating of 'worse than good'. Due to their typology, transitional waters, lakes and wetlands, and rivers require greater attention: 50% of transitional waters, nearly 44% of rivers, and 89% of lakes and wetlands were assessed as having a 'worse than good' status. By contrast, 100% of coastal water masses and reservoirs obtained the rating of good overall status.

Throughout the period 2012-2019, it is observed that all typologies tend to improve their ecological and chemical status, except for the ecological status of lakes and wetlands which, by remaining at 2012 levels, means that the proportion of these bodies of water with a 'good' overall status does not exceed 11%.

In relation to the global state of **groundwater,** 92% of the Basque Country's landmasses are 'good'. Although all groundwater bodies have a good quantitative status, 3 of them do not achieve good chemical status. The Gernika Alluvial aquifer in the Cantabrian slope is under pressure related to industrial activity and, in certain cases, records concentrations of chloroethenes and mercury that exceed environmental quality standards. Similarly, in the Mediterranean slope, the Vitoria Alluvial presents high concentrations of nitrates from agricultural activities; and the Miranda de Ebro Alluvial, despite showing a positive trend towards decreasing average concentration values, also reveals an excess of nitrates.

Figure 18. Evolution in the Basque Country of bathing areas according to water quality



Source: Basque Government Health Department.

The good quality **of bathing water** is a reality in the Basque Country. The data shows that in 2018, out of 41 bathing areas, 35 of them obtained the water quality rating of 'excellent', 5 obtained 'good' rating, and only 1 obtained a 'sufficient' rating. That represents a clear improvement compared to 2000 data, when there were 22 areas with 'good' water quality, 14 'sufficient', and 5 did not pass the 'insufficient' category. This means that during the period 2000-2017, the bathing areas in the Basque Country with 'sufficient' or 'insufficient' quality have decreased from 47% in 2000 to 2% in 2017. The absence of sand with an "excellent" bathing quality before 2010 is due to the fact that until that year, the "good" and "excellent" qualities were part of a single category ("good").

Regarding **drinking water**, according to 2019 data, the consumption is 81.44 m3 per capita, and the Basque population supplied with water of 'good' quality is estimated at 98.1%, limiting the population supplied with water of 'tolerable' quality to 1.6%, while water of 'poor' quality has been eliminated for drinking (2018 data).

One of the indicators in the Environmental Determinants of Health Panel, DAS Basque Country 2020 report, is the percentage of the population exposed to levels of trihalomethanes (THM) >50µg/l in drinking water. In Euskadi, all the population is supplied with water containing THM levels below 100 µg/l, and 39% of the population is supplied with THM levels above 50 µg/l according to 2017 data, thus complying with the established limits by regulations and the recommendations of the WHO.

Priority actions in environmental health in the Basque Country

21. Although the quality of outdoor and indoor air has significantly improved in recent years, there is still work to be done to reach the values recommended by the WHO. More $PM_{2.5}$ meters must be introduced to model and thus determine the air quality and describe the levels of exposure to which the Basque population is exposed. In addition, work protocols must be defined to measure the health impact of air quality, including relative risk, premature mortality, and years of life lost.

22. The appearance of new substances and pollutants in water requires evaluating whether the existing water quality monitoring system is sufficient.

23. Given the relationship between health and the environment, it is necessary to improve the system of climate change indicators, incorporating indicators such as hospital admissions for heat-related effects, excess mortality rates, mortality rates due to excessive natural cold exposure, episodes of exceeding microcystin and/or cyanobacteria in drinking and bathing water, and atmospheric concentration of allergenic fungal spores.

24. Creation of new solid indicators related to environmental noise exposure in sensitive population; educational centres, healthcare facilities, and day centres.

CHEMICALS

EUROPE: The EU aims to ensure that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in a way that minimizes any significant adverse effects on both human health and the environment. The EU has developed a Sustainability Strategy for chemicals - towards a non-toxic environment that promotes innovation and the development of sustainable substitutes that include non-chemical options.

The presence of chemicals is essential in our daily lives, but at the same time it can be harmful to human health and to the environment. For this reason, it is essential to regulate its production and use at all levels. From the European Union, there is a comprehensive legislation to ensure the health and the environmental protection facing the danger that some chemicals can entail, promoting the innovation towards safe and sustainable substances. Most of the specific groups of chemicals – such as biocides, phytosanitary products, or persistent organic pollutants (POPs) - have their own legislation, but the regulation of general chemicals is led by REACH[49] and CLP regulations[50], whose aim is to ensure a high level of protection of human health and environment.

The REACH Regulation enters into force on 1 June 2007, and with it the EU seeks to establish an internal market regarding chemicals, with strict safety standards for the protection of health and environment and at the same time fair and transparent for all countries of the Union, so as to encourage competitiveness in the European chemical industry. This regulation covers both chemicals used in industrial processes and those present in everyday items such as cleaning products, furniture or electrical devices; hence, the regulations affect most companies in the EU, which must identify the risks associated with the chemical substances present in their products and manage them to ensure their safe use.

For its part, the EU CLP Regulation enters into force in January 2009 and seeks the international harmonisation of the classification and labelling of chemicals through the Globally Harmonised System of classification and labelling of chemicals (GHS). It aims to clearly communicate the dangers of chemicals and their mixtures to both workers and EU citizens through the classification and labelling of chemicals.

Both for REACH and CLP, the reports of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) underline that, although progress is being made in its implementation, it still has a wide margin for improvement with a significantly slower implementation than expected. It is essential to make progress in the harmonisation of the single market for the implementation of REACH, particularly to ensure that the import of products meets the objectives of REACH to ensure equal opportunities.

In 2020, 15,811 companies are registered in the ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) identifying 23,186 different substances. The number of Spanish registered companies are 1,131 with 4,075 different substances. At the level of the Basque Country there are 60 registered companies and 148 different substances[51].

Regarding the competences, the responsibility for enforcing REACH/CLP in Spain lies with the regional authorities, so the Basque Country has competences to organize their implementation. This competition has traditionally been managed from the area of Public Health whose focus has always been on the chemicals being properly labelled, but it has never taken into account the impact on the environment. In 2011, the REACH Committee between health and environment was created, to which other areas such as customs or consumer protection were also invited as they were also involved in the Regulation. Until 2015, a lot of training was given to the technical staff of Health. However, that training has not been continued, and with the change of responsibilities of that technical staff, the current staff is not trained.

From an environmental point of view, actions have been performed in different areas:

[49] REACH: Registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals and chemical mixtures.

[50] CLP: Classification, labelling and packaging.

[51] https://echa.europa.eu/reach-2018-results

- From Inspection, the IPPC tool has been worked internally so that this one could verify compliance with REACH by companies, but currently its implementation has not been specified.
- It also works on the European Registry of Pollutant Emissions and Transfers[52] into the air, soil and water that the companies affected by IPPC, among others, are obliged to carry out. In this sense, URA performs water quality checks and analysis of a large number of parameters at many points and the air quality network also analyses specific pollutants in some cabins.

In general, it becomes necessary to make an intensive progress in two aspects: on the one hand, as has already been said, we must deepen our knowledge on the impact of chemicals on human health and ecosystems. On the other hand, it is urgent to address from a comprehensive perspective, mainly in the fields of health and the environment, its regulation, control and management.

[52] https://www.euskadi.eus/registro-vasco-de-emisiones-y-fuentes-contaminantes-eper-euskadi-e-prtr/web01-a2ingkut/es/

SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

EUROPE: 94% of the citizens of all Member States of the Union consider that the protection of the environment is important for them. In addition, 91% of the population states that climate change is a serious problem in the Union.

According to 83% of respondents, European legislation is needed to protect the environment[53].

The environmental policy has achieved significant successes in recent decades. For example, air and water have become cleaner, and products and production processes are more energy and material resource efficient. At global level, however, environmental pressures are increasing rapidly. A growing proportion of the world's population is shifting towards the same resource-intensive consumption patterns as developed regions. Since 1950, the world population has tripled to 7.5 billion, economic production has expanded 12 times and the consumption of primary energy has quintupled. Worldwide, trends indicate that resource consumption could double by 2060, water demand could increase by 55% by 2050, and energy demand could increase by 30% by 2040.

For European economies moving towards prosperity and, at the same time, protect ecosystems will require huge improvements in the current environmental policy. Science confirms that changing to the necessary scale will not be achieved through partial improvements in current modes of production and consumption. It will require fundamental transformations in systems that meet essential needs, such as food, energy, and mobility.[54]

But why do persistent problems such as climate change, the destruction of biological diversity, the decline in soil quality, and the increase in resource consumption continue to exist? And why do our consumption patterns exceed planetary boundaries? Exclusively technical approaches, such as filters for pollutants or new technologies, despite the increased efficiency they bring, they can also lead to problematic changes or even rebound effects (i.e. increased energy or resource consumption). Therefore, deeper social changes, "transformations", are considered necessary. Transformations occur when changes in culture, values, technologies, infrastructure, production, consumption, and policies are intertwined and mutually reinforced.

Therefore, the comprehensive view offered by socio-technical systems is of particular interest for environmental policy. They contribute to the fulfilment of certain social needs. Different aspects are involved: the way we move, the way we supply energy or feed ourselves is influenced by the range of products, infrastructures and technologies, market relationships and existing social rules and practices. These “system elements” are interrelated and influence each other.[55]

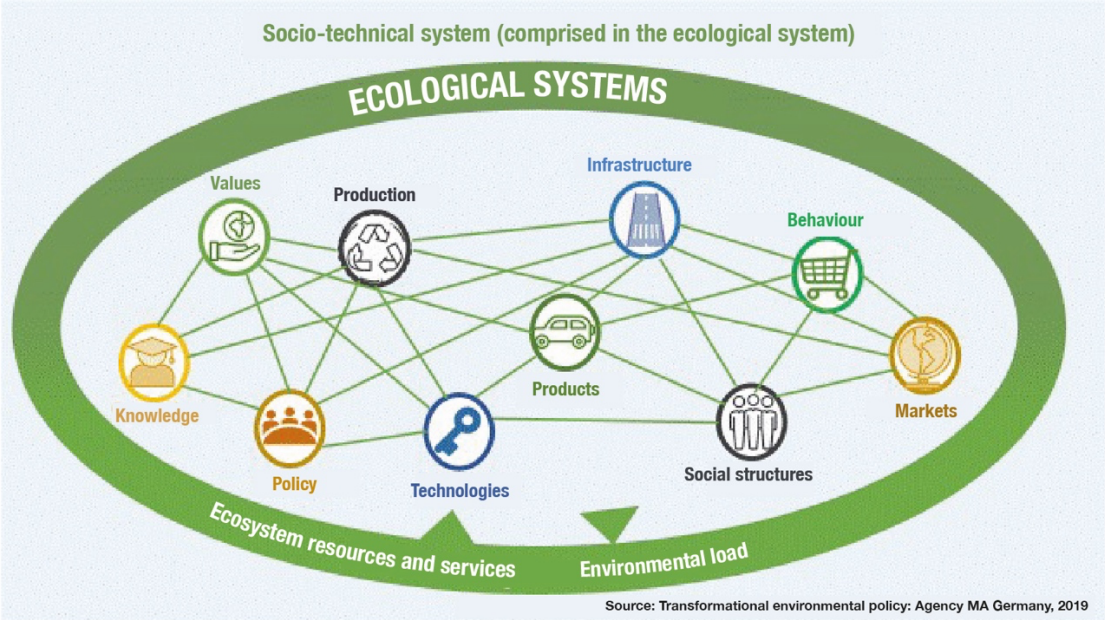
[53] Attitudes of European citizens towards the Environment. 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getSurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2257

[54] From Words to Action: How Can EU Policy Drive Sustainability Transitions? EEA. https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/sustainability-transitions/how-can-eu-policy-drive-1/from-words-to-action-how/view

[55] Transformational environmental policy: Consistently promote and shape sustainable development. German Environment Agency 2020

https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/1410/publikationen/transformative_environmental_policy_web.pdf

Image 4. Socio-technical system



Transformations represent changes not only in individual elements, but also in the entire socio-technical system. Many persistent environmental problems, such as climate change, are closely linked to the basic functioning of this system. The objective of a transformational environmental policy would be to comprehensively influence certain aspects so that their functions are carried out in a more sustainable manner.

The European Green Deal and Citizenship

European citizenship requires action on climate change and sustainability. Thousands of students, joined by parents and grandparents, have protested across Europe. Given this unprecedented public support and the scale of the tasks, it is not surprising that these issues constitute the core of European political ambitions in the coming months and years. A European Green Deal is the European Commission's response[56].

The European Green Deal represents an opportunity to improve health and well-being of citizens by transforming the economic model. The plan defines the means to reduce emissions, restore health of our environment, protect wildlife, create new economic opportunities and improve people's quality of life. All countries and sectors will be affected by this transformation without anyone being left behind in its implementation. In order to protect European citizens and ecosystems, the Commission will adopt an anti-pollution action plan to prevent air, water and soil pollution.

An example of the role that European society will play in environmental policy are the "*Multilevel Climate and Energy Dialogue Platforms*" promoted in the new proposal for the European Climate Law.[57]. Each State shall establish a multi-level dialogue on climate and energy in accordance with its rules in which local authorities, civil society organisations, business community, investors and other relevant stakeholders and general public can actively participate and discuss on the achievement of the Union's climate neutrality goal and to review the progress made.

[56] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_es

[57] European Climate Law Proposal. COM (2020) 80 final of 4.3.2020

https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2020/ES/COM-2020-80-F1-ES-MAIN-PART-1.PDF

Society and environment in the Basque Country

The Environmental Framework Program of the Basque Country 2020[58] has been the essential instrument of strategic environmental planning in recent years. This Program gives an essential role to Basque society as a whole. It is noteworthy that Basque society has a widespread perception that the environmental situation has improved in recent years and that its degree of commitment to the environment is increasing. Environmental problems continue to concern the vast majority of Basque citizens and it gives high importance to its protection, showing a strong willingness to enhance these policies..

It states that society has the right to demand that those who damage the common heritage by polluting the soil, air, or water be held accountable for the damage caused, and that little progress can be made in environmental policies without the contribution of a governance model that offers a real role to society.

Along the same lines regarding the role of society, the Environmental Bills drafted during the 9th Legislature of the Basque Government [59] point out relevant aspects such as the right of citizens to enjoy an environment suitable for human development, the need to improve knowledge and information about the environment, to which society as a whole is entitled, and the promotion of environmental education and awareness in all social sectors through actions that extend knowledge, information, attitudes, values, behaviours, and skills aimed at environmental improvement. These draft laws also highlight the need for advances in "smart regulation" outlined by the European Commission, which strengthens the role of citizens by promoting shared responsibility so that they become an active agent involved in preventing environmental degradation and promoting its protection and recovery.

Citizen perception and the environment in the Basque Country

Since 2001, the Basque Government has been performing measure works of the attitudes and behaviours of the Basque population in relation to the environment. Basque citizens' perception of the main environmental problems has varied over time, going from giving priority to water pollution and landscape destruction in 2001[60], to highlighting air pollution and climate change as main elements from 2013. In addition, the industry is progressively losing weight in citizens' perception as the main cause of environmental pollution, being citizens themselves who recognize their greater role and pollution from cars as the main environmental problem currently identified.

The report "*Attitudes of citizens towards the environment*" of 2017[61] concludes that 100% of the Basque population considers environmental protection important and 85% as an immediate and urgent problem. The most frequently reported environmental problems are discharges and pollution caused by factories; and in a global context their environmental concerns are mostly oriented towards climate change. Industry and factories would be the main cause of environmental problems in the Basque Country (47%), followed by transport (29%) and consumption habits (20%). On the negative side, it stands out that a large part of the Basque population is unaware of the protected natural areas and environmental infrastructures available, since 72% say they are not familiar with the Ekoetxeak environmental interpretation centres and 74% have not heard of the European Natura 2000 Network.

In 2017, the first monographic study on citizen perception of **energy and climate change** was conducted in the Basque Country[62]. 90% of the Basque population considers climate change is happening and more than 80% are worried about this problem. Regarding the feelings generated by climate change, 48% state feeling powerless, 36% feel indignation, and 31% feel fear. Regarding the measures to combat climate change, 95% are in favour of developing more renewable energy sources such as wind or solar power, 92% support promoting public transportation, and 80% believe that incentives for purchasing electric vehicles should continue. When asked about

---

[58] Basque Country 2020 Environmental Framework Programme

https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/5724/Programa_Marco_Ambiental_CAPV_2020.pdf?1422951795

[59] https://www.legegunea.euskadi.eus/inicio/

[60] Basque Country social ecobarometer. 2001. https://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/ecobarometro-social-2001

[61] Citizens' attitudes towards the environment. Basque Government. 2017

https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/o_17tef3/es_def/adjuntos/17tef3.pdf

[62] Attitudes of Basque citizens on climate change and energy. 2017

https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/o_17tef50/es_def/adjuntos/17tef5.pdf

the main reason for not taking action against climate change, 24% of the population cited comfort or lack of time, and 23% stated not knowing what to do.

In 2018, the monographic citizen perception study is focused on **water**[63]. Highlight some of the main results. 65% of the population considers themselves little or not informed at all about water problems in the Basque Country. 60% believe that rivers have improved in the last 10 years and 52% that coastal and estuary areas have improved. The perception about the price of the water paid in households is very diverse. 44% state they are paid too much and 41% state they are fairly paid.

In 2019, the Basque Government performed the first "**Qualitative study of social perception of climate change**". This work studies the drivers and brakes for citizen action in certain areas: sustainable mobility, energy consumption and sustainable food.

- climate change is perceived as a complex, shared (companies, governments and citizens) and global problem that needs to be addressed.
- the citizens give great importance to climate change from a rational reflection, but this one remains hidden by the short-termism generated by daily emergencies and problems.
- Citizens are able to identify the different effects of climate change. Some of them are already being perceived and the main aspiration is to slow them down.
- Citizens do not have a clear discourse on the main causes of climate change, although plastics, pollution and energy consumption are the most recurrent explanations.
- citizens believe that companies and administrations have greater power to address the origin of the problem than citizens. A fully responsible position is not yet taken.
- Citizens have sufficient information to understand the basis of climate change. The receipt of complex and/or contradictory messages appears as main risk.
- Citizens have a negative and pessimistic experience of climate change, which can affect their predisposition to action.

[63] Opinions about water. Basque Government. 2018

https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/o_18tef1/es_def/adjuntos/18tef1.pdf

Table 5. Drivers and Brakes for Basque citizens in the key areas of climate change

	DRIVERS	BRAKES
SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY	• Offer existence • Comfort / rapidity • Social standard • Health • Economic saving • Awareness-raising	• Lack of supply • Lower rapidity • Lack of security • Social status • Discomfort • Economic cost • Climatology
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY CONSUMPTION	• Economic saving • Ease • Family pressure • Awareness-raising • Safety	• Major investment • Restrictive legislation • Lack of knowledge of measures
SUSTAINABLE FOOD	• Health • Flavour • Boosting local economy • Fashion	• Price • Accessibility

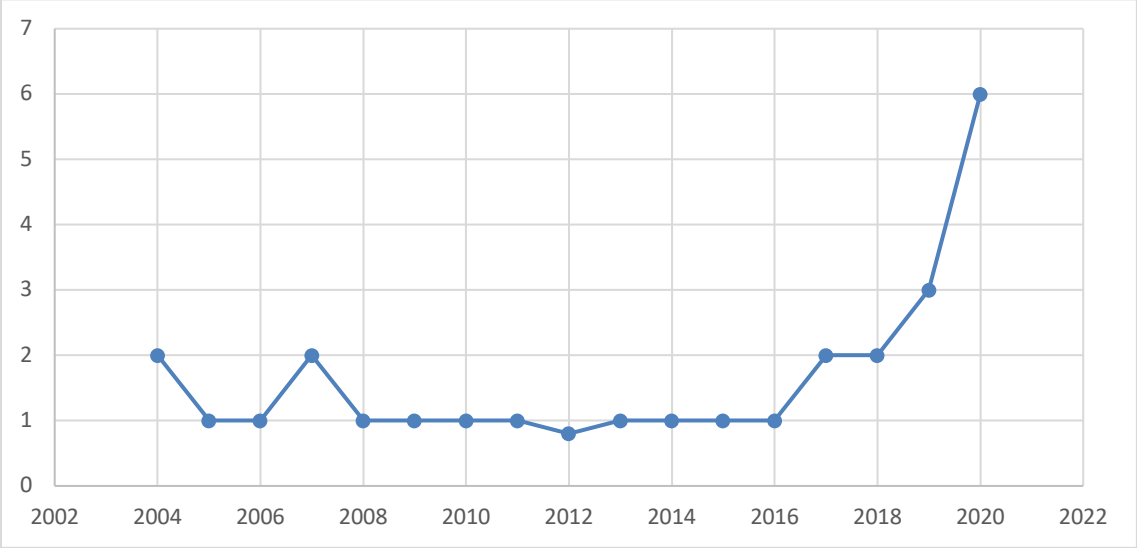
Source: Qualitative study of social perception of climate change. Basque Government. 2019

Finally, in 2020 an exhaustive study was carried out on the environment with a focus on **responsible consumption**[64]. Basque citizens asked by What are the three most important problems of the Basque Country? spontaneously, ranks in sixth place to the environment, reaching a 6% percentage of the total population (Spain 2%). The problems linked to work, housing, political situation, etc. appear highlighted in the first place. It is relevant to observe the change in priority taking place from the year 2019 and especially in 2020. Since the year 2004 until the year 2018, the environment was only identified as a relevant problem by 1-2% of the population. In the year 2012, this percentage was less than 1%. However, in 2019 it increased to 3% and it is in 2020 where for the first time pointed out as a major problem by 6% of Basque citizens. This percentage would drop to 3% when asked about major problems or concerns in each person's daily life.

[64] Basque Sociometer 72: Responsible consumption. Domestic animals. Basque Government. 2020 (Fieldwork: February 2020

https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/sociometro_vasco_72/es_def/adjuntos/20sv72.pdf

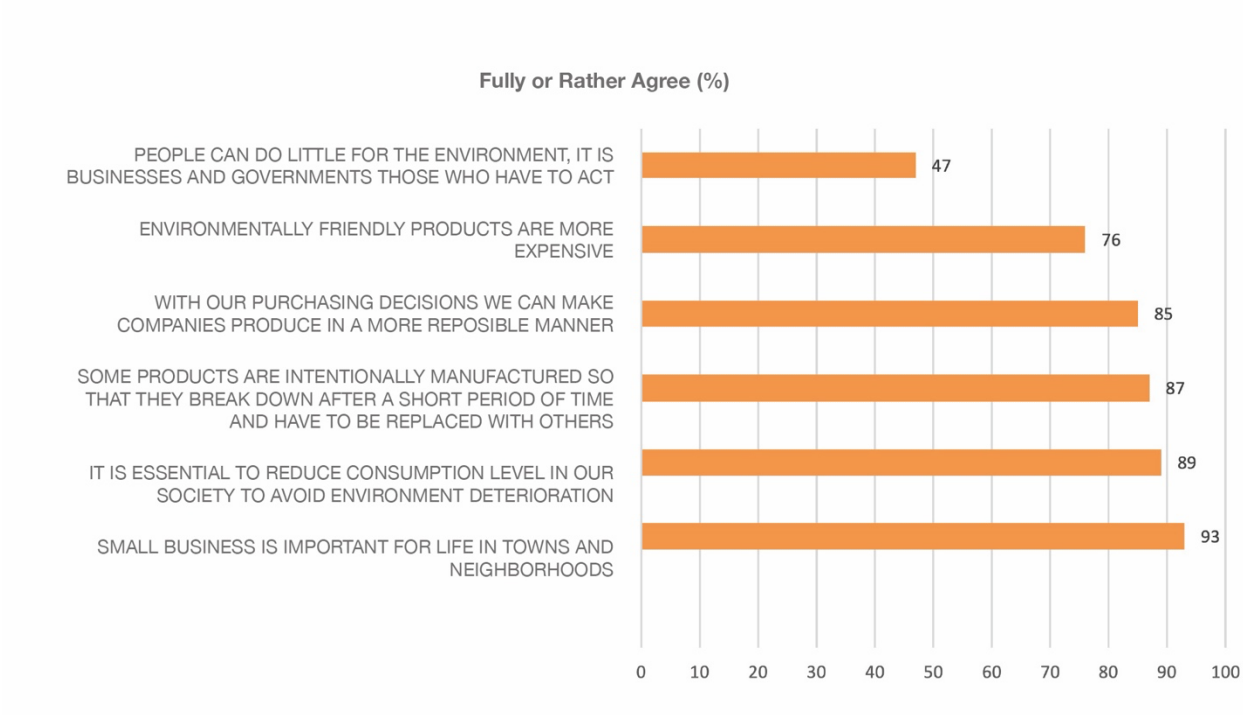
Figure 19. Basque citizenship pointing to environment as major issue (%)



Responsible consumption

The following graph summarizes the opinion of Basque citizens on responsible consumption.

Figure 20. General Opinion on Responsible Consumption



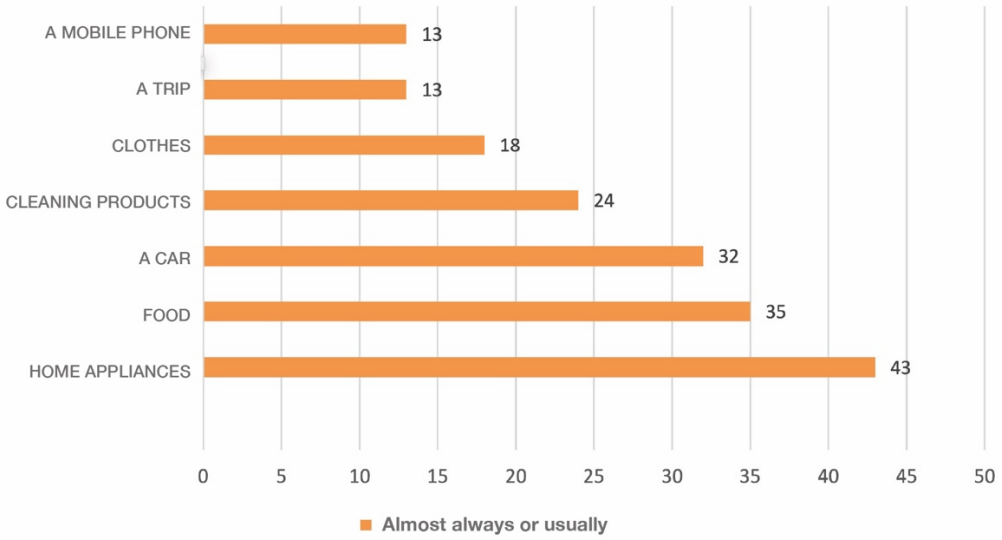
Source. Basque Sociometer 72. Basque Government 2020

It can be observed that a very high proportion of citizens are aware of the importance of small businesses (93%), the need to reduce the level of consumption (89%), and that purchasing decisions can make companies more responsible (85%). Similarly, a large majority also consider that some products are manufactured to break down

shortly after purchase (87%) and that environmentally-friendly products are more expensive (76%). However, less than half of the Basque population believes that it is only companies and governments who have the responsibility to act. 53% are aware of the co-responsibility that each of us has in relation to the environment.

When asked about the purchase of products according to durability, it is observed that 50% tend to buy products that, although more expensive, last longer, while 18% prefer cheaper products, although they last less. Regarding the willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products, 13% would be willing to pay much more, 60% would be willing to pay somewhat more but not much, and 18% would not be willing to pay more for this reason.

Figure 21. Consideration of environmental, social or ethical criteria in the purchase (%)



When asked about the consideration of environmental, social or ethical aspects in the **purchase** or hiring of certain products, it is observed that more than half of the people do not take them into account on a regular basis. This is an aspect that will undoubtedly require greater joint efforts to be able to change this reality. Greater demand for environmentally friendly products is one of the key strategies identified by Europe to reduce the environmental impact of consuming products such as food, mobility, and clothing.

Priority actions in citizenship and environment in the Basque Country

25. Elaboration of a "**2030 Sustainable and Responsible Consumption Action Programme**" in the Basque Country.

26. Promotion of the certificates of "**Sustainable Schools in the Basque Country**" in which works, experiences and quality of the centre are recognised regarding educational innovation, involvement and sustainability.

27. Development of the "**2030 Programme Agenda for University and Vocational Training**" so that sustainability is added as a tool for innovation in several training cycles.

28. Promotion of **municipal/county Mobility Plans**, supporting pedestrian street use, and encouraging the use of bicycles and public transport services.

29. Promotion of the supply and demand of **organic food** from the Basque Country.

PART II. ENABLING FRAMEWORK. APPLICATION TOOLS

4. MARKET-BASED INSTRUMENTS AND INVESTMENT

ECOLOGICAL TAXATION IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

EUROPE: Financial incentives, taxes and other economic instruments are effective tools to meet environmental policy objectives. The action plan for the circular economy encourages its use. Harmful subsidies for the environment are monitored in the context of the European Semester and the governance process of the Energy Union.

The increase in environmental taxes is one of the main challenges the Basque Country faces and it was already highlighted in the 2018 EIR Basque Country report[65]. Taxing pollution and resource use can generate more revenue and provide significant social and environmental benefits. In addition, environmental taxation is one of the few that generally does not harm growth.

The Basque Country has its own tax system. However, environmental taxation has not been addressed in a comprehensive way. The EIR Basque Country report in 2018 already pointed out that "*Progress to date has been limited to the drafting of studies and analysis of the potential for legislative development for the implementation of waste fiscal instruments (Tax on the Discharge of Industrial, Urban and Construction and Demolition Waste and Natural Aggregate Extraction Tax/fee*)."

Among the proposed measures on ecological taxation, this report highlighted that it was necessary "To rapidly advance in the analysis, design, and implementation of a comprehensive and complete green fiscal policy, aligned with the entire environmental policy and aimed at taxing harmful behaviours and rewarding those that favour the environment"

Progress in this chapter of taxing pollution has been minimal and is therefore one of the most urgent subjects in which the Basque Country must move forward in a decisive, coordinated and firm way. With official data from Eustat[66], in 2018 of a total tax collection of 16,554 million euros only 7.6% (1,255 million) came from environmental taxes. This situation becomes even more unfavourable considering only pollution taxes, which represent 0.05% of total taxes.

Table 6. Basque Country Environmental taxes 2018 (thousands of €)

Taxes related to energy	1.082.712
Taxes related to transportation	162.554
Taxes related to pollution	8.814
Taxes related to resources	1.560
Total of environmental taxes	**1.255.640**

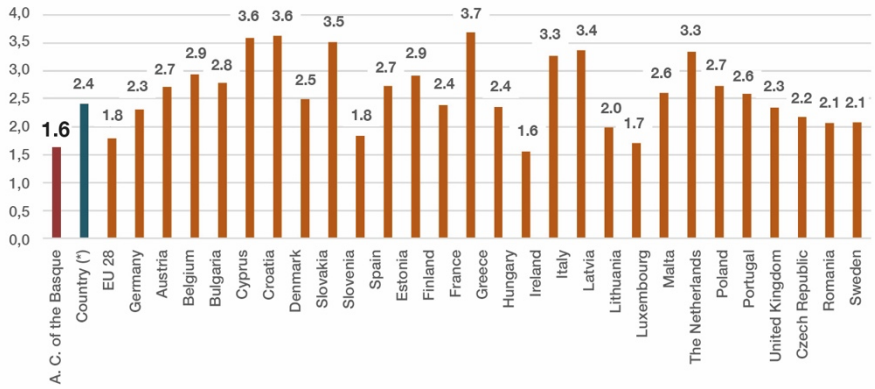
Source: EUSTAT. Environmental accounts. Environmental Tax Account .2020

[65] http://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/informe-seguimiento-iv-programa-marco-ambiental-pais-vasco

[66] https://www.eustat.eus/estadisticas/tema_457/opt_0/ti_Cuentas_ambientales/temas.html

As can be seen from the table above, environmental taxes related to energy account for nearly 90% of the total, while those related to pollution and resources account for less than 1% of the total weight.

Figure 22. Environmental taxes in Europe as a percentage of GDP. 2018

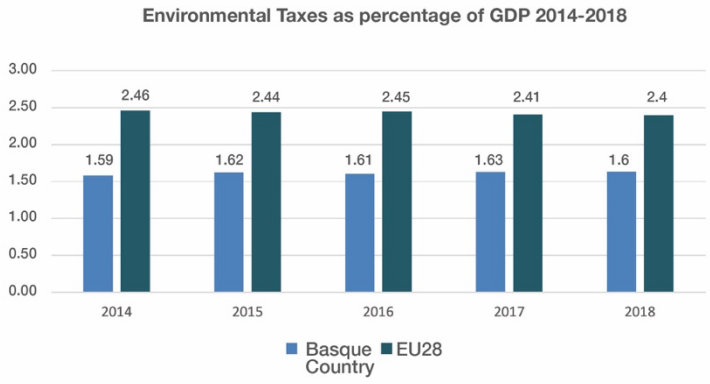


(*) 2018 advance data.

Source: EUROSTAT and EUSTAT. Environmental accounts. Environmental Tax Account.

In the Basque Country, environmental tax revenues as a percentage of GDP are among the lowest in the EU according to 2018 data, along with Ireland. Environmental tax revenues accounted for only 1.6% of GDP, compared to an EU average of 2.4%.

Figure 23. Environmental taxes as percentage of GDP 2014-2018



Source: EUSTAT.

Shifting the tax burden from labour to less growth-damaging taxes is one of the recommendations made by Europe to countries with low environmental revenues. The Commission has stressed on several occasions that there is a high potential for increasing certain environmental taxes. For this reason, the reform of environmental taxes can play an important role in sustaining economic growth. Taxing pollution and the use of resources would provide additional revenue and, at the same time, would contribute to discourage activities that would generate additional future costs in terms of sanitation, health costs, etc.

Figure 24. Basque Country Pollution Tax 2018

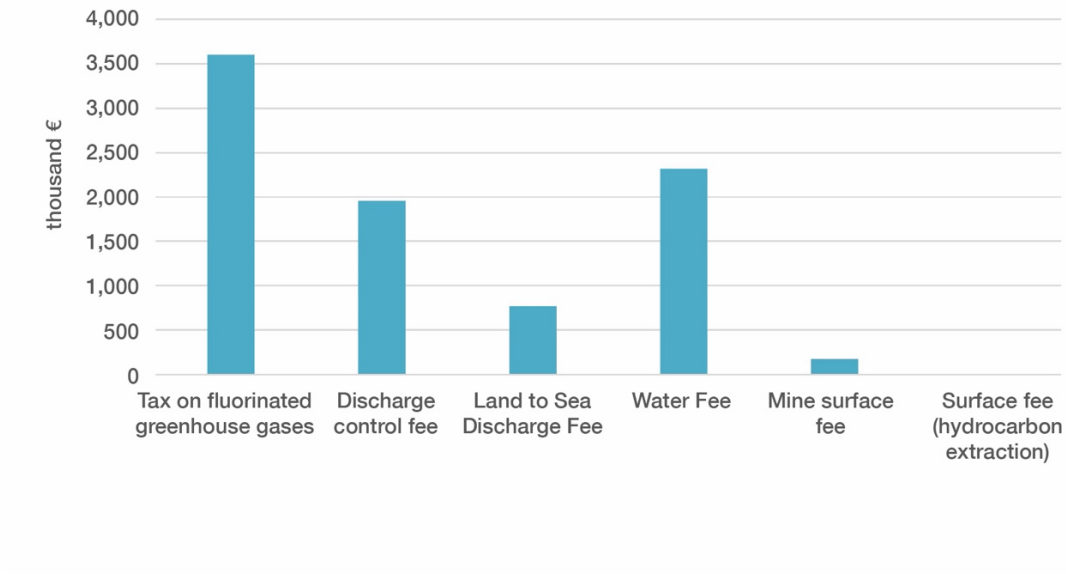
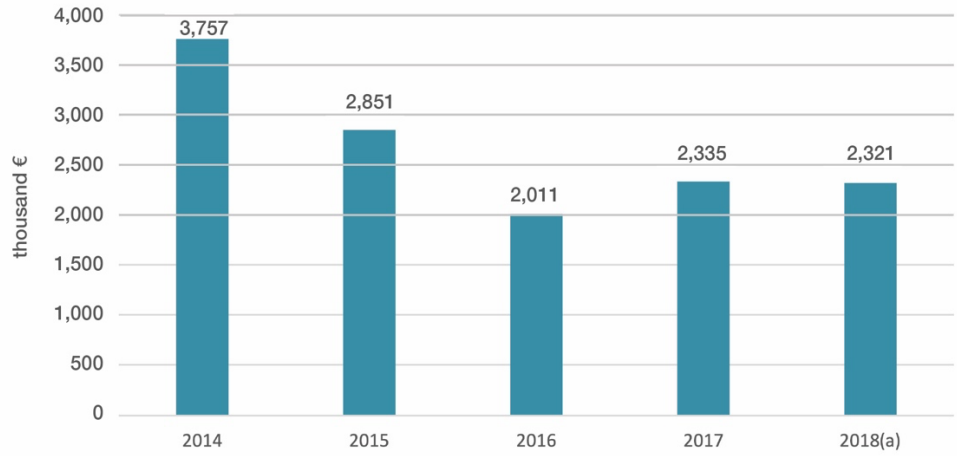


Figure 25. Evolution of the water canon in the Basque Country



Source: EUSTAT

Relevant conclusions can be drawn from the two upper graphs. In terms of pollution taxes, in addition to their low amounts, there is no tax on waste while taxes on water and air emissions do exist. On the other hand, the water fee only collects around 2.3 million euros annually, with a clearly decreasing revenue trend.

Two specific examples of pollution taxes that can and should be implemented in the Basque Country as a priority are municipal road taxes that do not always reflect the environmental behaviour of taxed vehicles and taxes on the deposit of waste in landfills.

In recent years, the Departments of Economy and Finance, as well as Sustainable Development and Environment of the Basque Government, have been working on the implementation of different tax measures related to pollution and resources. Below are the most advanced ones, being the tax rates only at the reference level.

- **Tax on the dumping of non-hazardous waste.** With a tax rate of €6.6 per tonne, it would generate a total impact in the Basque Country of €8.2 million in revenue, a negative impact on income of €4.2 million, and the loss of 58 jobs. But, the reuse of the collection would result in a positive fiscal balance of 6.7 million euros, would generate 5.5 million euros and 96 additional jobs.
- **Tax on the dumping of construction and demolition waste.** With a tax rate of €3 per tonne dumped, it would generate a direct income of €1.3 million and a total loss effect of €1 million in income and 13 jobs. The reuse of this collection would result in a positive fiscal balance of 0.9 million euros, without loss of jobs.
- **Tax on the extraction of aggregates.** With a tax rate of 1 euro per extracted tonne, it would generate a direct collection of 6.78 million euros and a total reduction effect of 2.9 million euros in income and 34 jobs. But reusing the proceeds would have positive effects on income and would create 84 additional jobs.

In this regard, in December 2020 the Basque Government presented the **Draft Law on Environmental Administration of the Basque Country**[67], which includes a section on environmental taxation in Article 85. It is noted that the Basque public administrations competent in tax matters will promote, after consulting the Department with environmental responsibilities of the General Administration of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, the use of ecological taxation and other instruments of environmental economic policy to contribute to the objectives of the Law. The revenues obtained by the general administration of the Basque Country may have a specific purpose and be used to achieve the objectives set out in this Law.

Prices should reflect environmental costs so that they provide incentives for investments in industry and changes in consumption patterns and lifestyles. Therefore, the Basque Country must prioritize its full potential of environmental taxation in order to obtain environmental, economic and social benefits and advance decisively in this direction.

Priority actions in Environmental Taxation in the Basque Country

30. In collaboration with the Provincial Councils, implement a comprehensive green fiscal policy with the aim of reaching 2.4% of GDP, in line with the European average. The increase in tax revenue should primarily be directed towards public investments to reduce pollution and waste, as well as combat climate change.

31. Prioritize with urgent action the approval of these 3 environmental taxes linked to pollution and resources:

    - Tax on the dumping of non-hazardous waste.
    - Tax on the dumping of construction and demolition waste.
    - Tax on the extraction of aggregates.

[67] https://www.euskadi.eus/proyecto-ley/15-ley-general-del-medio-ambiente-cambio-climatico-y-conservacion-de-la-naturaleza/web01-s2ing/es/

GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

EUROPE: The EU's policies on green public procurement encourage member states to adopt additional measures to apply green public procurement criteria to at least 50% of public procurement tenders. The European Commission is helping to increase the use of public procurement as a strategic tool for environmental protection.

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is an important tool for the achievement of environmental policies related to climate change, use of resources and sustainable production and consumption[68]. The purchasing power of public procurement amounts to around €1.8 trillion in the EU (about 14% of GDP). A substantial part of these funds is allocated to sectors with a significant environmental impact, such as construction or transportation. Green public procurement can therefore help reduce significantly the negative environmental impact of public spending and help support innovative and sustainable companies. The Commission has proposed a set of green public procurement criteria for the EU[69].

Since 2004, the **Basque Country** has included green public procurement in various strategic plans and specific agreements, such as the Governing Council Agreement of 29 April 2008 on the incorporation of social, environmental, and other public policy criteria in the procurement of the Autonomous Community Administration and its public sector[70]. In parallel, since 2005 the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government, through the public company Ihobe, offers tools and support to Basque administrations in this matter[71].

In 2011, the first **Green Public Procurement and Purchase Program 2011-2014 was approved**[72]**.** This Program manages to establish clear objectives and to achieve a current global level of green purchasing and hiring in the Basque Government of around 30% in terms of the number of hires.

Guidance on environmental criteria in procurement specifications and training are highlighted as the main needs for promoting green procurement in organizations.

In 2016, the **Green Purchase and Public Procurement Program of the Basque Country 2020** was approved[73] with the objectives of achieving a degree of environmentalisation in public procurement of 50% by 2020 and of progressively advancing in 20 groups of products and services prioritised for their relevance.

The Program has been led by the Departments of Economy and Finance, Public Governance and Self-Government, and Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment; together with the support of the technical secretariat of Ihobe, Public Environmental Management Society. Since its approval, it has established the necessary framework of action to mobilize the Basque public sector in the internalization and integration of the environmental variable in its procurement and contracting.

In the Basque Country, more than 200 entities have already incorporated environmental criteria into their contracts. A very significant advance is the homogenization of all GPP information in the Basque Country's electronic

[68] Royal Decree 6/2018, of 12 January, establishing the Interministerial Commission for the incorporation of ecological criteria in public procurement. https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2018/01/22/pdfs/BOE-A-2018-750.pdf

[69] In the Communication 'Public procurement for a better environment' (COM(2008) 400), the Commission recommended the creation of a process to establish common criteria for green public procurement. The essential idea of green public procurement is to apply clear, verifiable, justifiable, and ambitious environmental criteria to products and services, based on a life cycle approach and a scientifically verified data foundation.

[70] BOPV, No. 116 of 19 June 2008

[71] https://www.ihobe.eus/compra-publica-verde

[72] https://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/programa-compra-y-contratacion-publica-verde-gobierno-vasco-2011-2014

[73] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/compraverde/es_def/adjuntos/Programa_Compra_verdeCAST2016.pdf

contracting platform, Revascon. The analysis of the total procurement concludes that the global green purchasing level of the Basque public sector in 2019 has been 24% in number of tenders and 22% in economic volume.

Table 7. Results of the Green Purchase and Public Procurement Program of the Basque Country 2020

	2017	2018	2019
Number of hirings with incorporation of environmental criteria	ND	457	1,407
Economic volume of hiring (Mills. €)	ND	301	449
Entities participating in the Program	19	31	35

Source: Ihobe, Basque Government Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment through REVASCON[74]

In 2019, 1,407 tenders included environmental aspects, amounting to almost 450 million euros in economic terms. Municipal entities have been the most active, although in terms of the amount of contracts awarded, those carried out by the Provincial Councils are of greater value.

Of the entire Basque public sector, the entities with the highest overall percentage of environmentalisation are those classified as "Others", referring to entities and bodies such as research centres, water and transport consortia, conference centres, museums, and various foundations; as well as the Parliament and the University of the Basque Country.

Basque Country Public Sector	% green purchase (in no.)
Local entities	29%
Foral entities	17%
Basque Government	16%
Others	38%

Source: Ihobe, Basque Government Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment

Taking into account groups of priority products, works and services, the balance of green purchasing and hiring is very uneven. The 50% target has been met for some groups: paper, building cleaning, bus transport and gardening. In others, however, there is a long way to go, especially in textiles, messaging, travel, and even the purchase of computers and electricity.

In 2019, the Green Public Procurement Program of the Basque Government was awarded in Europe in the Procura+ Awards, a network of public entities that particularly values its deployment throughout the public sector of the Basque Country. It has also received the “Purchase Diamond” award granted by the Spanish Association of Purchasing, Hiring and Procurement Professionals, AERCE.

[74] Starting from the 2018 financial year, the collection of this information was systematized through REVASCON, the Basque Register of Contracts. https://www.contratacion.euskadi.eus/inicio/.

Table 8. Main publications linked to the GPP in the Basque Country[75]

• **Green Public Purchase and Procurement for the effective use of natural and economic resources.**	• **Practical Manual of Green Public Procurement and Purchase. Models and examples for implementation by the Basque public administration.**
• FSC and PEFC certifications and their use in public procurement.	• Circular hiring. How to promote circular economy with green public purchasing and procurement.
• Guide to Green Public Procurement and Life Cycle Cost Analysis.	• Practical guide on the use of environmental certifications in public purchase and procurement.
• Public Purchase of Innovation	• Basic guide of implementation of Green Public Purchase in municipalities.
• Cost analysis applied to sustainable product design.	• Benefits of environmentally sustainable public procurement.

Source: Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government. 2020.

Priority actions in Green Public Procurement in the Basque Country

- Elaboration and approval of the Basque Country's 2030 GPP Programme, interlinking offer and demand to a greater extent, the sector analysis of opportunities and Life Cycle Costing.
- Actively involve the business sector, particularly SMEs, by establishing a public-private network to facilitate public procurement projects and promoting circular economy.

[75] All publications available at: https://www.ihobe.eus/compra-publica-verde

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDS AND INVESTMENTS

EUROPE: European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) regulations require Member States to promote the environment and climate in their financing strategies and economic, social and territorial cohesion, rural development and marine policy programs.

Achieving environmental objectives set by environmental policy necessarily involves an efficient use of available economic resources. At the same time, Europe is promoting the integration of environmental perspectives into all policies as a lever for mobilizing European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

With this philosophy, the European Green Pact is presented in December 2019 as a strategic framework to promote new sustainable economic growth, aimed at transforming the EU into an equitable and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, in which there will be no net greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 and the economic growth will be decoupled from the use of resources. The Pact also aims to protect, maintain and improve the EU's natural capital, as well as protecting health and well-being of citizens against environmental risks and effects. This roadmap focuses on transforming climate and environmental challenges into opportunities and for this, public budgets play an essential role: they must contribute to reorient public investment, consumption and taxation towards environmental priorities. In addition to all of the above, there is the economic and social situation caused by the COVID-19 health crisis, for which Europe has created a recovery plan called "Next Generation" with a clear orientation towards a climate and digital transition, and in which special attention is paid to the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity. Proof of this change in direction is that more than 20% of the budget of the Next Generation funds, along with the new multiannual financial framework 2021-27, is allocated to the "Natural Resources and Environment" budget item."[76].

Coinciding with the impetus from Europe, in 2020 a clear signal is launched in the Basque Country by configuring economic and environmental policies under a single department and establishing sustainability as the driving force of economic development. The challenge for the economic fabric and citizenship of the Basque Country indissolubly links economic recovery and social progress with decarbonization of economic growth and the recovery of biodiversity.

In 2017, the Basque Country allocated €215.6 million public funds to the environment (Basque Government and Provincial Councils budgets), an increase of 18.7% since the mid-term evaluation of the IV WFP prepared in 2017. In addition, in 2020 the Directorate General for Climate of the European Commission approved the INTEGRATED LIFE URBAN KLIMA 2050 project which will extend until 2050 and which represents a budget of 20 million euros, of which 10 million come from the EU. The project is led by the Deputy Ministry of Environment, but also integrates other Directorates of Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment, the Department of Health, the Basque Meteorology Agency, at 3 DDFF, as well as the city halls of the three capitals, municipalities such as Bakio, Bermeo, Gernika and Zarautz, technological centres and the University of the Basque Country.

Within the European Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2014-2020, regarding the ERDF funds, the European Commission has performed major revisions to the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, reaching €179.1 million. However, the main modification has been motivated by the pandemic which entailed a radical change in the orientation of the Program so that €94M was allocated to health expenditure to tackle the pandemic. Therefore, many of the actions that had been planned, including some that were already under way, had to be deprogrammed. Of the overall budget of the Fund, 15.9% covers thematic axes 4, 5 and 6 of the original programming where environmental actions are framed[77].

Regarding the FEADER Fund, the total amount for the 2014-2020 programming period has been €87.1 million, of which 36.5% of the total (€31.8 million) has been allocated to environmental actions. Given the nature of being a

[76] Source: European Commission.

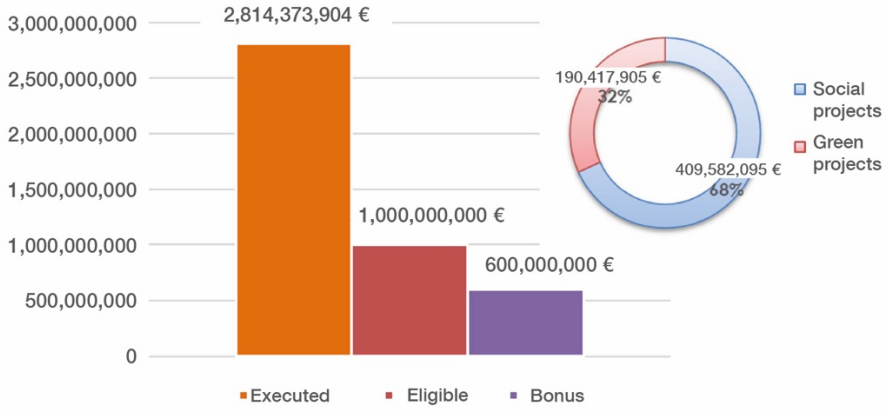
[77] It is expected that there will be a new modification to the program outlined here during 2021, which will be implemented in the next 2-3 years and will change these percentages.

co-financed Fund, a financing from the European Commission of €31.8M entails a volume of €10.6M for environmental actions of the Basque country funds, either from the Government's budgets or from the DDFF.

There have been no changes regarding the environmental actions included in the FEMP, with a total allocation of just over €74 million remaining the same.

The Basque Government, within the context of the "2030 Agenda", has developed a Sustainable Financing Framework that defines Sustainable Financing Instruments. These instruments can take on different structures, such as bonds, private placements, loans or Schuldscheins issued by the Basque Government, with their net proceeds being used for green, social, and/or sustainable projects. The environmental objectives addressed are adaptation to climate change, pollution prevention and control, sustainable management of water and wastewater, biodiversity' preservation, renewable energy and energy efficiency and clean transport. Under this framework, two sustainable environmental bond issuances were launched in 2018 and 2019 for a total value of 352.5 million euros.

Budget executed in eligible projects, eligible projects, total bond amount, and proportion of green and sustainable projects financed. 2019



Source: Metroeconomics[78]

[78] Economic, environmental and social impact of sustainable bonds. Allocation and impact of the sustainable Basque Country bond 2019. Metroeconomics

5. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND KNOWLEDGE

INFORMATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

EUROPE: The most effective protection of the environment by citizens lies on the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention

(i) access to information;

(ii) public participation in decision-making; and

(iii) access to justice in environmental matters.

it is of crucial importance for public authorities that environmental information is shared by citizens and the business world in an effective and efficient way[79]. Public participation allows authorities to take into account the concerns of citizens in their decision-making. Access to justice includes a set of guarantees that allow citizens and NGOs to use national courts to protect the environment[80]. This includes the right to file legal appeals.

Public environmental information

At the time of elaborating the 4th WFP 2020 of the Basque Country, the need to prepare, manage and share environmental information both between the different levels of the Administration and companies and citizens was already established as a transversal priority. It also emphasizes the need for environmental public information to be accessible, understandable and to reach the different environmental sectors. In addition, the strategic objective 5 "Ensuring policy coherence by intensifying environmental integration" itself promotes the development of a better and broader knowledge of environmental policy and its impacts.

The EU's eGovernment Action Plan, which has a time horizon until 2020, is supported in its environmental part by the Aarhus Convention, the Directive on public access to environmental information[81] and the INSPIRE Directive[82]. The first two ensure public access to environmental information, both proactively from the Administration and upon specific request. On the other hand, the INSPIRE Directive aims to promote the exchange of electronic data between different public authorities with different types of information. Sharing this information improves informed decision-making while also facilitating compliance with public administrations' information obligations.

The Basque Administrations collect, study and publish environmental information in their different thematic areas (climate change, biodiversity, air, water, soil, waste and material resources). They also perform stable statistical operations that provide up-to-date information on the main environmental vectors. In this regard, the websites of the Department responsible for the Environment of the Government and Ihobe make available to the public rich information on environmental policy, the regulatory system, publications and good practices in the environmental field. On the other hand, the "Open Data Basque Country" system of the Basque Government offers a large set of environmental databases for consultation and exploitation.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, the high volume of data related to the state and progression of the environment does not correspond to the quality of the information it provides. There continues

[79] The Aarhus Convention, Directive 2003/4/EC on Access to Environmental Information, together with the INSPIRE Directive 2007/2/EC, create the legal basis for the exchange of environmental information between public authorities and the general public.

[80] The guarantees are set out in the Commission Communication on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters OJL 275, dated 18.8.2017 and Citizens' Guide.

[81] European Commission, 2016. Inspire Directive.

[82] European Union, Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information.

to be a lack of coordination between different sources of information, and the processing of data so that it can be useful to citizens also has room for improvement.

Public Participation

Public citizen participation is a fixed goal in all processes of the Basque environmental policy, and it is reflected in objectives 4 “Increase the sustainability of the territory” and 5 “Ensure policy coherence” of the 4th WFP 2020. With public participation it is intended that the corresponding authorities take into account the interests of citizens and decision-making is made with the best available basis.

At present, the 2030 Agenda is established as the framework reference for the design and implementation of sustainable development policies by municipalities, and it includes a good practice on how citizens and civil society actively participate in the processes of development, monitoring, and assessment of environmental policy.

In 2020, 64 municipalities have been involved in the 10th program of assessment and monitoring of municipal policies in the Basque Country, measuring their effectiveness through the estimation of features. In addition, 27 municipalities and 2 regional entities have assessed the degree of implementation of their sustainable development plans. This study has been performed from the perspective of their contribution to the SDGs, which represents a good starting point when addressing the development of their Local 2030 Agendas. So far, around 50 municipalities have shown their interest in developing their Local 2030 Agenda. In this process, citizen involvement is a strategic element, required to achieve the marked challenges, which will strengthen the involvement of local agents in the design and implementation of municipal policies.

Public participation processes are a common practice in the elaboration of programmes, plans and sector strategies related to the environment in the Basque Country. The challenge today is to turn these specific processes into more structured platforms for enquiry/involvement/action, but not only at the time of drafting but also in the implementation of the same, accepting the co-responsibility of citizens in achieving the goals of environmental planning. The platform of the Irekia Open Government Basque Government has great potential in this sense.

Table 9. Participatory processes of the main plans related to the environment in the Basque Country

	Year	Instruments	Results
PGG 2020	2014	Meeting with companies	102 contributions
		Mailboxes at points of participation	116 contributions
		Open Space with Citizenship	81 contributions; 50 participants.
		Irekia and social media	15 contributions
Geodiversity Strategy 2020	2014	Direct contact with org., opinion leaders and presentations at the UPV/EHU	112 organizations, 11 opinion leaders, 72 students
		Irekia	131 participants
		Geopedia Campaign on Facebook	3 760 interactions (20,986 views)
Climate Change Strategy 2050	2015	Social forum: working groups with prior submission of supporting documentation	21 participants
		Irekia	15 participants (30 comments)
Biodiversity Strategy 2030	2016	Social Forum: 9 working groups	74 participants (96 contributions)
		Irekia	1 participant
Education Strategy for Sustainability 2030	2016	Stakeholder meetings (8)	86 participants
		Thematic working groups (5)	75 participants
		Irekia	7 participants
Green Public Procurement and Purchase	2016	Stakeholder meetings (15)	84 participants
		Irekia	5 participations

Programme 2020			
Circular Economy Strategy 2030	2020	Stakeholder meetings (10)	64 participants
		Social Forum: 6 working tables	170 participants
		Irekia	2491 visits (6 participations)

Source: own elaboration based on the reports of participatory processes of each Plan/Strategy.

On the other hand, it is not enough to open spaces where citizens can participate, it is also necessary that this citizenship is formed in the environmental field so that their involvement is high added value. In addition, greater training also encourages the participation of stakeholders themselves. In this sense

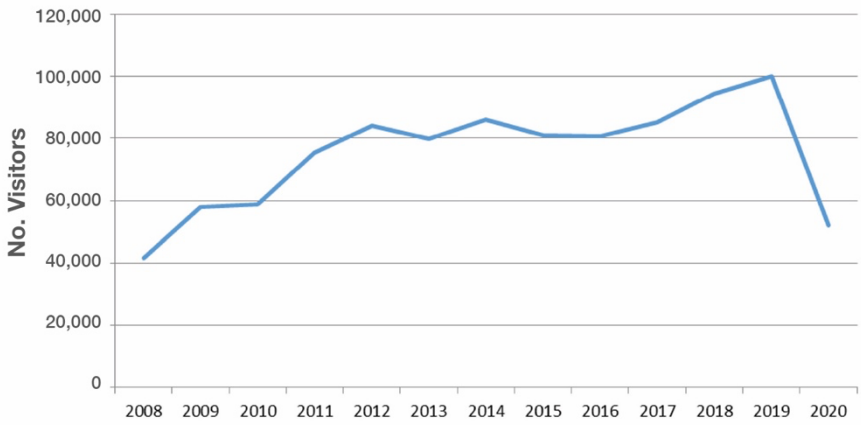
The Heziberri 2020 Plan has added environmental sustainability as one of the axes of the educational pedagogical model of the Basque Country. In addition, based on the Local Agenda 21 developed in many city halls of the Basque Country, it has promoted the school Agenda 21, as an educational strategy for sustainability and a way of student participation in municipal action plans.

The Ingurugela centers are a network of public facilities to support teachers and schools, which coordinate environmental education plans and programs in the non-university education system. In addition, in the Basque Country there are four Ekoetxeak centres, education facilities located in natural locations (Ekoetxea Urdaibai, Ekoetxea Txingudi, Ekoetxea Meatzaldea and Ekoetxea Azpeitia).

Currently, almost 70% of the compulsory schools are in the School Agenda 21 program (more than 220,000 students), of which around 20% are recognized as “Sustainable School”[83]. For its part, the number of visitors to the Ekoetxeak has more than doubled since 2008 except in 2020, when due to the pandemic the centers had to close for several months and when they could reopen it was done with very limited capacity.

[83] Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment

Figure 26. Number of visitors to Ekoetxeak 2008-2020



Source: Basque Government, Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment.

Access to justice

The third pillar for effective governance is transparent access to justice. Applied to environmental issues, it is a set of guarantees that provides coverage to citizens, NGOs and other interested agents to judge the legality of the actions or omissions of the public Administration before the courts. It is essential given the decentralisation of competences of environmental legislation in the EU, and therefore it must be ensured that this access to justice is real and that it is not conditioned by the cost of exercising the right to such justice.

It is also the role of central, regional and local governments to ensure that economic operators, both public and private, comply with the environmental obligations that the legislation regulates. And, in this sense, the ability of citizens and NGOs to have access to justice is essential to achieve the correct application of the same. To support the role of all agents, it is essential to gather and share knowledge and evidence on the state of the environment and environmental pressures, causes and impacts.

Regarding access to justice, there are no differences with respect to the situation in the State as a whole. The current legislation aims to guarantee citizens and NGOs this access although, as the European Commission has stressed, such access is negatively affected by obstacles when accessing courts. This may explain why different jurisdictional bodies have submitted questions to the CJEU asking for clarification as to whether access should be granted and under what conditions.

Priority actions in Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice

- Improve the systems of documentary and statistical information regarding the environment, coordinating the actions of the different competent bodies to ensure the coherence of data enrichment offered.
- Consolidate the participation processes to achieve homogeneous results in the different plans, programs and strategies.
- To make the most of information technologies to promote public participation and improve tracking systems for online and social media activity and presence, establishing features and evaluation mechanisms.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

EUROPE: Those involved in the implementation of environmental legislation at European, national, regional and local level need to have the knowledge, tools and capacity to ensure that legislation and governance will achieve the intended benefits.

Achieving effective governance that develops environmental legislation, implements environmental policies, and extends to all levels of administration, European, national, regional, and local, requires a clear and defined institutional framework with adequate levels of knowledge and competencies, where all policies, environmental and non-environmental, are coherent with each other, prioritizing collaboration among all stakeholders, and combining the application of legal, market, and training instruments, among others.

Ability to apply rules

It is essential that the European, central, regional and local administrations have the necessary capacity, skills and training to perform their own tasks and to cooperate and coordinate in an efficient manner, within a multilevel governance system.

Environmental policy is strongly conditioned by the guidelines that arise from Europe in the form of Directives and other Regulation and that the central state must transpose. In the case of Spain, the competencies for the protection of the environment, as far as basic legislation is concerned, are exclusive to the Parliament and the Government. However, the high decentralization of the Spanish public administration means that it is the Autonomous Communities (CCAA) that develop this basic legislation, and can also establish additional protection measures.

In the case of the Basque Country, most of the environmental competences rest on the Basque Government, which incorporates them into all government action so that the environment becomes a cross-cutting axis to all Basque politics. In addition, the three Provincial Councils and the City Halls also have important powers. In the case of Provincial Councils, their competencies are focused on environmental taxation, nature conservation, management of protected natural areas and environmental infrastructure, as well as functions with a high impact on the environment such as territorial and urban planning, management of roads and transportation, agriculture, livestock and forestry, and public works. The Provincial Councils of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa are competent regarding the management of beaches, although the General State Administration is competent regarding the management of the water of the Ebro basin and the protection of the Cantabrian coast.

For its part, the local administration has competences, within the environmental field, with regard to waste management, air quality and sustainable urban development, including municipal urban planning, mobility management or sanitation and water supply services.

The European Commission has recognized the work done by the Basque Government in using the European Commission's EIR methodology in the mid-term evaluation of the 4th Environmental Framework Program 2020, highlighting the boost in knowledge and dialogue that has been generated in the evaluation of the implementation of environmental policy and its results.

Coordination and integration

The European Commission has come a long way in the process of rationalizing environmental procedures so that duplicated or unnecessary administrative burdens are reduced; this also means speeding up decision-making without compromising the required quality commitments. Although the Commission's action has focused on the Environmental Assessment procedures applicable to projects, this resource rationalization process should be extended to all areas[84].

The Basque Country included in objective 5 of the 4th WFP "Ensure policy coherence intensifying environmental integration", so that by 2020 all public policies with direct or indirect link to the environment are coherent and their actions generate synergies for the goals of all of them. To this end, coordination between administrations and shared information is essential. One differentiating element promoted by the WFP itself, and whose objective is the coordination among different government policies and the integration of environmental policy into other policies, has been the definition, promotion, and implementation of key projects marked by shared interdepartmental governance. 1. Environmentally exemplary management; 2. Healthy territory; 3. Environmental taxation; 4. Green manufacturing; 5. Circular power supply; 6. Green infrastructure.

The working procedure with Key Projects has consisted of addressing the environmental challenges identified in the 7th Environmental Action Programme of the European Union and turning the environment into a competitiveness factor for all areas of intervention of the public administration. Additionally, the interdepartmental shared work on Key Projects has created spaces of trust and dialogue where resources and knowledge can be shared among different government departments and other stakeholders.

Another area of coordination in environmental policy lies at the different levels of the Administration. Given the distribution of competences in the Basque Country, technical coordination between the Environmental Departments of the Provincial Councils and the Basque Government is essential. In this regard, although there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of integrating regional agencies into coordination bodies, interinstitutional coordination has greatly improved between the Provincial Councils, Basque Government, and also with municipalities. The **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.** presents the main coordination mechanisms in the different topics related to Basque environmental policy.

Table 10. Main mechanisms for coordination and participation in environmental policy

TYPOLOGY	BODY	DESCRIPTION	COMPOSITION
General	Environment Advisory Council BED	Advisory body whose aim is to promote the participation of representative sectors of economic, social, and academic interests in the development, consultation, and monitoring of environmental policy. It is attached to the Basque Government's Department for Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment.	Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment; Department of Territorial Planning, Housing and Transportation; Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing Commission of the Basque Parliament; Department of Education; Department of Tourism, Trade and Consumer Affairs; Department of Health; Provincial Councils; EUDEL; environmental movements; consumer organizations; business organizations; labour organizations, technology centres, research centres, UPV/EHU, expert personnel.
	Environmental Commission ECOM	Body of relation, participation, and coordination among the various administrations that act in the field of the environment in the Basque Autonomous Community.	Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment; Department of Territorial Planning, Housing and Transport; Department of Health; Department of Security; Department of Tourism, Commerce and Consumption; Department of Education; Provincial Councils; EUDEL

[84] Guidance document from the Commission in 2016 on the establishment of coordinated and/or joint procedures that are simultaneously subject to assessment under the EIA Directive, Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, and Industrial Emissions Directive. OJ C 273, 27.7.2016

	Interdepartmental days of key projects	The meetings group together all political and/or technical staff (in separate sessions) involved in the development of the Key Projects of the 2020 WFP to convey an overview of the work being carried out	Political and technical staff involved in the development of key projects of the WFP 2020
	Driving groups of the key projects of the WFP 2020	Set up for the management and promotion of each of the key projects of the WFP 2020.	They are formed by the representatives of all the directorates, departments and institutions involved in the development of each project
Nature and Biodiversity	Naturzaintza	Associate advisory and cooperation body on nature preservation. Attached to the department of the General Administration of the Basque Country responsible for the management of natural resources and nature conservation.	Provincial Councils, Municipalities, AGE, UPV/EHU, Associations, Agricultural Trade Unions, Forestry Associations, experts.
	Boards of the natural parks and the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve.	The natural parks have their own advisory and collaborating body, called the Board of Trustees, which is attached in each case to the management body of the natural park.	At a minimum, it is composed of representatives from the Basque Government, the management departments of the affected Provincial Councils, the municipalities and local entities, the affected rights holders, associations with a proven track record in environmental study and protection, agricultural unions, and forest owner associations
Water	URA	The Basque Water Agency aims to carry out the water policy in the Basque Country.	It has different participation bodies. Its own Board of Directors is constituted by representatives of the Basque Government and Provincial Councils. The Water Council constituted by representatives of the Basque Government, Provincial Councils, local and State authorities, users and associations for the defence of nature
Waste	OCRU	The Urban Waste Coordination Body (OCRU) of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country is the entity in charge of coordinating the activities of the European Week of Waste Prevention in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.	It was created at the request of the Basque Parliament and is composed of the Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment Department of the Basque Government, together with the Environment Departments of the three Provincial Councils.

Source: Update of the table Main mechanisms for the coordination and participation of environmental policy [85]

Priority Actions in the Efficacy of the Administration

- Evaluate the efficacy of the various coordination and participation committees of the existing environmental policy
- Continue progressing in the construction of a global and coordinated vision of environmental policy, avoiding encapsulating fragments of environmental policy in different institutions / departments.
- Prioritize action 57 included in WFP 2020, which proposes the creation of technical coordination mechanisms for monitoring environmental policy between the Departments of Environment of the Provincial Councils and the Basque Government

[85] https://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/informe-seguimiento-iv-programa-marco-ambiental-pais-vasco

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

EUROPE: The sustainable development establishes a link between environmental, social, and economic policies within a coherent framework and therefore contributes to the implementation of legislation and policies on the environment.

The UN General Assembly adopted in 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an action plan for people, planet and prosperity, which also intends to strengthen universal peace and the access to justice. The Agenda is specified in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 193 countries ratify it unanimously and enter into force on 1 January 2016. They are universally applicable to both developing and developed countries. The motto of the 2030 Agenda is: "Let nobody be left behind."

Many SDGs incorporate a strong environmental dimension and have specific goals dedicated to the progress of basic environmental issues. In particular, SDG 13 promotes climate action, while SDG 14 and 15 aim to progress in the preservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems and the sustainable use of their resources. Environmental sustainability is also related to agriculture (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), water (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), tourism (SDG 8), infrastructure and industry (SDG 9), cities (SDG 11) and consumption and production models (SDG 12). In total, 41 of the 169 goals address the quality of the physical environment, either directly or indirectly.[86]

In this line, in January 2020, Europe highlights that climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat faced by Europe and the rest of the world[87]. **The European Green Deal for the European Union** renews the commitment of the Commission to respond to the challenges of climate and the environment, which constitutes the defining task of this generation. The atmosphere is warming up, and the climate changes from year to year. Of the eight million species on the planet, one million are at risk of extinction. We are polluting and destroying forests and oceans.

The European Green Deal, a roadmap to provide the EU with a sustainable economy, is an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategy for the Basque Country 2030 Agenda

The Basque Country is an "ancestral town that loves innovation." In April 2018, the "**Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda**" was presented, and the second Voluntary Follow-up Report (2017 and 2018 Follow-up Reports) had been already published. The Basque Country is a pioneer in Europe in the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is committed to advancing social cohesion, solidarity with migrants, commitment to the environment and the fight against climate change; smart growth and quality employment, especially for young people, and effective equality between women and men.[88]

The Basque Government has accepted the universal challenge posed by the United Nations 2030 Agenda, nd is committed to contributing to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on issues of common interest that are relevant to our territory. These 17 Objectives have been linked to 15 Country Objectives developed along 100 Goals, which involve 75 Planning Instruments (15 of them designated as strategic) and the approval of 39 Legislative Initiatives, as well as a Dashboard with 100 Features (50 structural+50 sector).

The coordination of the Basque Country Agenda is located in Lehendakaritza and its governance is performed through the organs of the General Secretariat for External Action. The participation of sector agents is through each

[86] EEA SOER, 2020 https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2020

[87] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_es

[88] https://www.euskadi.eus/agenda-2030-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible/web01-s1leheki/es/

one of the areas of Government and the holistic vision of the Agenda is performed by aligning all sector policies involved.

The Basque model stands out for its self-government with competences for the financing and development of public policies. The "2030 Agenda" presents the experience of the "**Basque Country Sustainable Bonds**"[89]. The two issuances of Sustainable Bonds performed in 2018 and 2019 worth 1.1 billion euros, represent one tenth of the annual Budget of the Basque Government. The funds raised finance projects of a social or environmental nature and are linked to the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, 83% is allocated to social investments to ensure essential services for people: Health, Education, Housing or Social Protection. Also, the generation of quality employment in industry, intelligent specialization or blue economy. And the remaining 17% to environmental investments intended to ecological-energy transformation, clean and sustainable transport, water management and renewable energies. These Sustainable Bonds have been very well received, the demand has quadrupled the offer and two thirds of the issuance has been subscribed by international investors from 13 countries.

In the business sector, the Basque Country has 117 signatories to the United Nations Global Pact that integrate human rights, labour, environmental and anti-corruption strategies into their businesses.

Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the environment

In the 80s, the Basque Country had to face serious pollution problems that threatened the health of citizens and the general state of the environment. Specific examples were the significant pollution of the air, water of the rivers or the thousands of tons of waste dumped without control from the manufacture of the pesticide lindane. Since then, environmental protection policies have been implemented with the establishment of regulations, strategies and plans, in line with European policies. This effort has allowed the progressive improvement in the main environmental features.

Table 12. Evolution of environmental policy approaches in the Basque Country

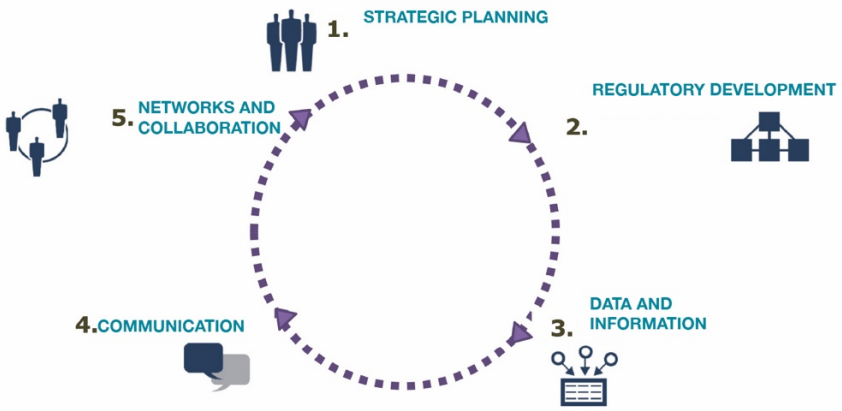
Characterization of key challenges	Essential characteristics	In politics since	Policy approaches (examples)	Assessment approaches and tools (examples)
Specific	Linear cause-effect, punctual focus of pollution, local, urgent actions.	80s and 90s	Policies and instruments for single use (air, polluted soils, waste, etc.) Corrective policy	Dataset
Diffuse	Cumulative causes	1st decade 2000	Integration of policies, market-based instruments, increasing citizen awareness. Policy Ex. General Environmental Law, Environmental Framework Programmes, Environmental Education…)	Data set, features. Ex. States of the environment (DPSIR approach), Annual environmental features. Sector reports. Planning assessments.
Systemic	Systemic causes.	Since 2010	Political coherence, systemic approach, long-term vision and multidimensional	Features, environmental accounts, practice-based knowledge, systems assessment,

[89] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/7071/eu_2333/adjuntos/2020/Marco-de-Bonos-Sostenibles_Gobierno-Vasco-2018.pdf

			approach. Preventive Policy Ex. 2020 Environmental Framework Programme: Environmental factor of prosperity and well-being. Health, territory, governance, education challenges.	stakeholder involvement, prospective. Ex. Environmental states (DPSIR approach), Annual environmental features, Environmental statistical body, Environmental scenarios 2030, Planning assessments, EIR Basque Country 2017

Source: Adaptation of SOER 2020, EEA

Image 5. Simplified environmental policy outline in the Basque Country, 2020



Given the significance of having a strategic and interrelated environmental planning, the main plans and strategies in force as of December 2020 are summarized below:

Table 13 . Main Plans/Strategies linked to the Environment in the Basque Country

Environmental Framework Programme 2020[90]	Circular Economy Strategy 2030[91]
Climate Change Strategy 2050[92]	Geodiversity Strategy 2020[93]
Energy Strategy of the Basque Country 2030[94]	Education Strategy for Sustainability 2030[95]
Health Plan 2013-2020[96]	Biodiversity Strategy 2030[97]
Basque Country Rural Development Programme 2015-2020[98]	Flood Risk Management Plan 2015-2021[99]
2030 Sustainable Transport Master Plan[100]	Eastern Cantabrian Hydrological Plan 2015-2021
Territorial Planning Guidelines (DOT)[101]	Environmental Inspection and Control Plan 2019-2026[102]
Rector Plan for the Use and Management of the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve[103]	Waste Prevention and Management Plan 2020[104]
Soil Protection Strategy 2030 (under development)	*Circular bioeconomy strategy (under development)*

Source: Basque Government.

In the section Networks and collaboration, highlight the international environmental networks in which the Basque Government participates, such as ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, The Climate Group and Regions4. In terms of public-private and public-public collaboration, the following stand out among others: Cluster of Environment Aclima, Confebask, Basque Ecodesign Centre and the BC3 Basque Centre for Climate Change.

Below appear highlighted the most relevant environmental actions listed in the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda reporting for 2019:

[90] https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/5724/Programa_Marco_Ambiental_CAPV_2020.pdf?1422951795

[91] https://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/estrategia-economia-circular-euskadi-2030-2

[92] https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/es/debates/1020-estrategia-vasca-cambio-climatico-2050?stage=presentation

[93] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/proyecto/geodibertsitatearen_estrategia/es_def/adjuntos/geodivers_2020.pdf

[94] http://www.industria.ejgv.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/estrategia_energetica_euskadi/es_def/adjuntos/3E2030_Estrategia_Energetica_Euskadi_v3.0.pdf

[95] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/estrategiaeducacion2030/es_def/adjuntos/EstrategiaEducacionSostenibilidad2030.pdf

[96] https://www.osakidetza.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/publicaciones_informes_estudio/es_pub/adjuntos/plan_salud_2013_2020.pdf

[97] https://www.euskadi.eus/documentacion/2016/estrategia-de-biodiversidad-de-la-comunidad-autonoma-del-pais-vasco-2030/web01-a2ingdib/es/

[98] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/osoa_dokumentazioa/es_def/PDR%20version%205.1.pdf

[99] https://www.uragentzia.euskadi.eus/informacion/documentacion-del-proyecto-de-plan-de-gestion-del-riesgo-de-inundacion-2015-2021-correspondiente-a-la-demarcacion-hidrografica-del-cantabrico-oriental/u81-0003413/es/

[100] http://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/garraioak_iraunkorrearen_gida/es_def/adjuntos/PDTS_Euskadi_2030_ES.pdf

[101] https://www.euskadi.eus/directrices-de-ordenacion-territorial-dot/web01-a2lurral/es/

[102] https://www.legegunea.euskadi.eus/documentacion-relevancia-juridica/plan-de-inspeccion-y-control-ambiental-2019-2026/x59-contfich/es/

[103] https://www.euskadi.eus/web01-a2ingurd/es/contenidos/documentacion/prug/es_def/index.shtml

[104] https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/10852/Plan_Residuos_CAPV_2020.pdf?1515424141

Table 14. Actions on environmental issues

SDG 2030	Relevant actions on environmental issues Basque Country 2019
SDG 2. Hunger Eradication	• Development at AZTI and transfer of software to food companies to perform Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of products, which results in savings in raw materials, energy, and water.
SDG 6. Drinking water and sanitation	• The electronic processing of practically all authorisations and concessions of works in the public hydraulic domain is open to citizens. • URA is working on eradicating the first outbreak of the invasive species Myriophyllum aquaticum detected in the Basque Country in Lopidana.
SDG 7. Clean and affordable energy	• Initiation of the processing of a Sector Territorial Plan for Renewable Energies • Approval of Decree 25/2019 on the certification of energy efficiency of buildings in the Basque Country, their control and registration procedure. • The Basque List of Clean Technologies includes renewable energies such as solar photovoltaic and mini wind, subject to a 30% tax deduction. • The government has tendered for the first time the contracting of electricity generated from renewable sources for the entire autonomous public sector.
SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth	• 170 professionals trained in the field of circular economy. • Launching of the first postgraduate program in Industrial Circular Economy in the country, in accordance with the curriculum plan by the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), in collaboration with the public society Ihobe and the Basque Ecodesign Centre. • Ihobe and Aclima launch an internship program to promote youth employment in the environmental sector.
SDG 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	• Agreement with ACLIMA - Cluster of Environmental Companies to promote the calculation of carbon footprint in companies with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. • Eco-innovation programme within the framework of the Science, Technology and Innovation Plan.
SDG 11. Sustainable cities and communities	• Publication of the guides “Local 2030 Agenda. How to address the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level" and "How to improve resilience to climate change in municipalities in the Basque Country." • Berringurumena 2019 program that promotes the granting of aids to local entities for the development of pilot projects for innovation and environmental demonstration.
SDG 12. Responsible consumption and production	• Basque Country Ecological Footprint Report 2019. • Campaign on responsible consumption and circular economy. • Publication “Keys to join the green public procurement in the Basque Country"
SDG 13. Climate action	• The Basque Government presents its measures facing climate crisis at the UN Climate Summit and at the New York Climate Week. • The Lehendakari reads an institutional statement regarding the Climate Change emergency in July 2019. • Integrated LIFE Urban Klima 2050 project. Amount of 20 million euros. • Preliminary draft of the Basque Climate Change Law. • Guide for Adaptation to climate change in land management instruments. • High-resolution climate change scenarios for the Basque Country.

	• The Al Gore Foundation in Spain rewards the Basque Government due to its firm commitment facing climate crisis.
SDG 14. Underwater life	• Collaboration with the European Commission in the definition and development of the Blue Economy strategy. • Climate risk analysis of the fishing sector and vulnerability of the Basque coast to climate change " Kostegoki"
SDG 15. Life in terrestrial ecosystems	• Monitoring report on Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country 2030. December 2019. • Elaboration of the six-year report on the compliance with the 2019 Habitats Directive for the Assessment and Monitoring of the Natural Heritage of the Basque Country. • Elaboration of the Public Use Plan of the Protected Natural Area of Txingudi Marshes. • The UNESCO Chair prepares a map of green infrastructure for the Basque Country. • The Ekoetxea Network of the Basque Government, with over 100,000 visitors in 2019, carried out 568 awareness and environmental education activities.
SDG 17. Partnerships for the achievement of the objectives	• The Basque Government signs an agreement with UN Environment to support developing countries in circular economy and eco-design. • Cooperation and water institutions in the Basque Country join forces to launch a cooperation program on water and sanitation in Central America.

The following table shows the data corresponding to the Basque Country and the EU-28 for the features directly related to the environment included in the EU set of indicators on sustainable development goals that Eurostat uses to monitor progress towards SDGs in the context of the EU.[105].

Progress of the Basque Country towards the SDGs. Selection of environmental features

SDGs Feature	Unit	EUSKADI Year	EUSKADI Value	EU Year	EU Value
SDG 2 – Hunger eradication					
1. Organic farming area	% agricultural area used	2018	**0.2**	2018	7.5
2. Index of common birds in agricultural habitats	Index 2000 = 100	2015	**66**	2018	80.7
SDG 3 – Healthy living and well-being					
3. Population reporting living in noise-affected households	% population	2018	**21.2**	2018	18.3
4. Exposure to air pollution from suspended particles (PM2.5)	$\mu g/m^3$	2018	**9.0**	2017	14.1
SDG 6 – Drinking water and sanitation					
5. Inland bathing areas with excellent quality water	% bathing areas with excellent quality water	2019	**100**	2018	80.8
SDG 7 – Clean and affordable energy					
6. Primary Power Consumption	Index 2005 = 100	2018	**84**	2018	90
7. Proportion of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption	%	2018	**16.8**	2018	18
8. Dependence on energy imports	% gross available energy imports	2017	**92.5**	2018	55.7
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth					
9. Resource productivity	EUR per kg, chained volumes (2010)	2017	**2.81**	2018	2.04
SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure					
10. Proportion of buses and trains in total passenger transport	% total passenger-km land transport	2016	**12**	2017	16.7
SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities					
11. Population reporting living in noise-affected households	% population	2018	**21**	2018	18.3
12. Municipal waste recycling rate	% total generated waste	2018	**36**	2018	47
SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production					
13. Circular material utilization rate	% contribution of materials for domestic use	2017	**8.03**	2017	11.7
14. Waste generation excluding main mineral waste	kg per capita	2018	**2.083**	2016	1.772
15. Generated urban waste per capita	kg per capita	2018	**535**	2018	488
SDG 13 – Climate action					
16. Greenhouse gas emissions	Index 1990 = 100	2017	**96.3**	2017	78.3
17. Diffuse greenhouse gas emissions index	Index 2005 = 100	2017	**89.6**	2017	90.1
18. Greenhouse gas emissions per capita	Equivalent CO_2 per capita	2017	**9.2**	2017	8.8
SDG 14 – Underwater life					
19. Coastal bathing areas with excellent quality water	% bathing areas with excellent quality	2019	**83**	2018	87.1
SDG 15 – Terrestrial ecosystem life					
20. Proportion of forest area	% total land area	2016	**67.8**	2015	41.6
21. Soil sealing index	Index 2006 = 100	2019	**106**	2015	104.2
22. Surface area of land areas designated under NATURA 2000	Km^2	2019	**1.680**	2018	784.252

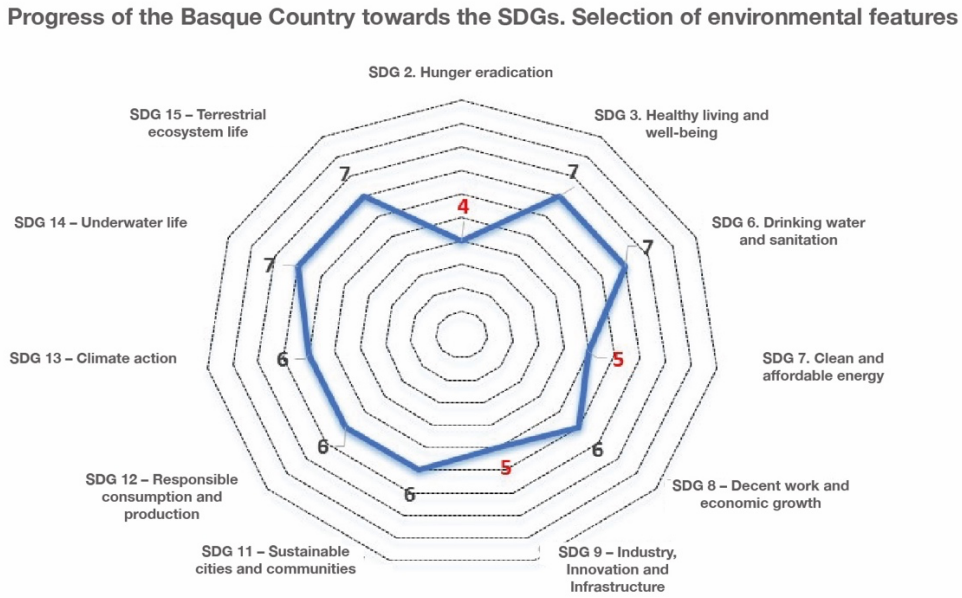
Source: Own elaboration based on Eustat and Eurostat. April 2020

[105] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/main-tables

Environmental progress towards sustainable development goals

Based on the indicators in the previous table, along with the complete panel of indicators available from the environmental statistics agency of the Basque Government and the monographic profiles based on indicators, we can qualitatively summarize the progress in achieving the SDGs related to the environment in the following graph:

Figure 27. Progress in the Basque Country towards the environmental SDGs



Overall, the Basque Country stands out for its good environmental performance, reflected in its high position in the international Environmental Performance Index[106], the evolution of its Ecological Footprint, which was 7% lower in 2019 than in 2001[107], and in its evaluation of environmental sustainability related to the Sustainable Development Goals among the autonomous communities of the State[108].

However, the previous graph of progress assessment of the SDGs linked to the environment in the Basque Country shows that **there are still important challenges to be addressed**. Specifically, in SDG 2, everything related to local organic agriculture, food waste and evolution of birds are essential tasks that require greater global effort. In the SDG 6 and 13, of energy and climate change, the Basque Country, like the European Union, relies heavily on fossil fuels and faces a series of challenges in providing affordable, safe and sustainable energy.

Closely related to these SDGs is SDG 9, in which transport remains an important workhorse in environmental sustainability. Moving towards sustainable mobility in the Basque Country and the progressive incorporation of electric mobility will be priority actions to improve the environmental situation.

Some of the current main environmental challenges, such as biodiversity and climate change, are characterized as problems with a high degree of complexity and uncertainty and of an interdependent nature. In this new context, by 2030, Euskadi needs to address new challenges in critical areas such as mobility, energy, and food; as well as promoting simplification, knowledge, and co-responsibility tools.

[106] https://www.euskadi.eus/informe_estudio/indice-de-rendimiento-ambiental-epi/web01-a2inggar/es/

[107] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/huella_ecologica/eu_def/adjuntos/Aztarna-Ekologikoa-WEB.pdf

[108] https://www.observatoriosostenibilidad.com/2019/05/17/resultados-informe-sos-17-x-17-17-ods-en-las-17-ccaa-agenda-2030-en-espana/

Environmental policy in the Basque Country is in the process of transformation. A transformation in line with Europe and in the interest of a greater result for global effort made. To achieve this, it is crucial to move from mainly regulatory interventions to interventions with a greater integration of the environmental dimension in sectoral policies. The breaking of sectoral silos incorporating environmental sustainability is the key to the new stage. For example, circular economy in industry and construction, climate action in energy and transport policy, environmental determinants in human health, or sustainable food and biodiversity protection in rural development policy.

The environmental policies of the last decades have borne fruit, but maintaining the current trend "business as usual" may be insufficient to adequately address the new challenges identified[109]. Some of the most outstanding results obtained in environmental terms are the absolute decoupling of the Basque economy with variables such as Greenhouse Gases, consumption of materials, particles or urban waste to landfill.

The direction is adequate but the current intensity is no longer sufficient. The articulation of a prosperous, modern and advanced society is only possible by protecting and respecting our natural resources. By doing so, environmental sustainability is fully integrated into the Basque Country 2030 Agenda. It is necessary to deepen quickly into the challenges indicated.

Priority actions on SDGs and environment in the Basque Country

32. Integrate fully the environmental variable into transport, energy and food models.

33. Create stable frameworks for collaboration between Administration, companies, research and technology centres and University as a lever to address and assess progress on the different environmental challenges linked to the SDGs.

[109] Environmental scenarios of the Basque Country 2030.

https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/4793/Escenarios_Ambientales.pdf?1402398282

ANNEX. CLOSING OF THE 2015-2020 CYCLE OF THE 4TH

ANNEX. CLOSING OF THE 2015-2020 CYCLE OF THE 4TH ENVIRONMENTAL FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME.

The Environmental Framework Program 2020[110], approved in December 2014, included 75 priority actions and 6 Key Projects of a transversal nature for the entire Government. In February 2017, as an accountability of environmental policy, the biennial Monitoring Report of the Environmental Framework Program 2020 was presented[111]. This report indicated that 68 actions were in execution and 7 were in definition phase, 54% being the overall implementation of the actions collected.

Below appears performed the overall balance of the Environmental Framework Programme 2020.

Progress on the WFP 2020 Strategic Objectives

WFP 2020 Strategic Objectives	Highlighted actions 2015-2020	Progress degree
1. Protecting our natural capital	• Biodiversity Strategy 2030, • Good practices in space management European Network Natura 2000 • Ornitho platform for the monitoring of species.	
2. Moving towards a competitive, low-carbon and circular economy.	• Climate change strategy 2050 • Circular Economy Strategy 2030 • Eghilur project on hydrological scenarios of climate change • Support to circular economy, ecodesign and eco-innovation projects.	
3. Improve the health and quality of the environment	• Visualization of an air quality map with estimated concentrations by municipality • Information system on electromagnetic fields and health • Noise mapping elaboration • Flood risk reduction actions.	
4. Sustainability of the territory	• Activate+ program to change people's habits • Workshops on sustainability of Kontsumobide's training programmes, • Projects of product environmental footprint • Analysis of the current mobility situation • Schools recognized as Sustainable Schools.	
5. Environmental integration	• Eco-innovation programme within the framework of the Science, Technology and Innovation Plan • Barometer of Climate Change-Basque Country Energy • Environmental Health Determinants in the Basque Country. • Platform Against Food Waste[112]	
6. International Liability	• The Basque Government presents its measures against climate crisis at the UN Climate Summit in New York. • The Basque Government signs an agreement with the UN Environment to support developing countries in circular economy and eco-design	

Legend: Green: Significant progress. Yellow: Some progress, but not enough. Red: Clearly insufficient progress.

[110] https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/5724/Programa_Marco_Ambiental_CAPV_2020.pdf?1422951795

[111] https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/pma/es_def/adjuntos/1_IVPMA_Seguimiento2016_v1_Memoria_170126.pdf

[112] https://sostenibilidad.elika.eus/despilfarro-alimentario/plataforma-de-euskadi-contra-el-despilfarro-alimentario/

WFP 2020 ACTIONS THAT HAVE NOT PROGRESSED SIGNIFICANTLY	
NO.	**Performance**
OE1-4	Integrate the quantification of environmental costs and benefits into the interventions of the Administration.
OE1-10	Enhance ecosystem services in the restoration of degraded areas.
OE4-43	Promote coordination between municipalities for the development of shared green infrastructures
OE4-45	Promote non-motorized mobility in the city, promoting travel on foot and by bicycle.
OE4-50	Promote training and perform awareness and information campaigns to reduce citizen's carbon footprint.
OE5-57	Creation of technical coordination mechanisms for monitoring environmental policy between the Departments of Environment of the Provincial and Basque Government.
OE5-58	To advance the incorporation of the interaction between socioeconomic and environmental factors in ex ante and ex post evaluations of policies.
OE5-69	Make the most of ICTs and networking to promote innovative environmental training systems.
OE5-70	Advance in environmental training by segments of people and groups with similar interests and needs, taking into account the training throughout people's lives.

Regarding the progress in the 6 Key Projects of WFP 2020, the following table summarizes the overall balance.

Progress on WFP Key Projects 2020		
Key WFP projects 2020	**Highlighted actions 2015-2020**	**Progress degree**
1. Environmentally Exemplary Administration	• Approval of the Decree 178/2015 on energy sustainability of the public sector of the Basque Country and development of inventories of buildings and mobile park. • Energy Sustainability Law of the Basque Public Administration in the Basque Parliament. • Development and approval of the Green Public Procurement Program 2020[113]	
2. Healthy territory	• Development of the WFP 2020 valuation report through the lens of health. • Publication of air quality maps by municipalities.	
3. Environmental taxation	• Technical preparatory work Departments of Economy and Finance and Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government for the implementation of tax figures linked to pollution.	
4. Green Manufacturing - Circular Economy	• More than 240 Basque companies applying the principles of Life Cycle Analysis. • New list of clean technologies for corporate tax deduction.	

[113] https://www.euskadi.eus/informacion/compra-y-contratacion-publica-verde/web01-s2ing/es/

	• Youth training at the Basque Ecodesign Center Hub.	
5. Circular feeding	• Participatory European projects in relation to sustainable food production. • Incorporation of local products in collective canteens. • Good practices in circular feeding in the Basque Country	
6. Green infrastructure	• Integration of Green Infrastructure in the participatory process for the review of the Guidelines for Territorial Planning. • Methodological proposal for the identification and representation of a green infrastructure network at regional and comarcal level	

Legend: Green: Significant progress. Yellow: Some progress, but not enough. Red: Clearly insufficient progress.

In brief, of the 75 actions included in the 2020 Environmental Framework Programme, only 9 have not reached a significant degree of implementation. Of the 6 Key Projects indicated as interdepartmental work platforms, four have advanced in a very high degree, one in a medium degree and one final in a low degree. Based on everything analysed, we can conclude that the overall **implementation of the Environmental Framework Program 2020 would be above 85%.**

The following table reflects the main achievements performed during the lifetime of the Framework Programme and some of the new challenges to be addressed in this type of strategic environmental planning:

Main Achievements and Challenges of the Basque Environmental Framework Programme	
Achievements 2020	**Challenges 2030**
• **Effectiveness**. High degree of execution as a whole. **Significant progress has been achieved towards meeting a large part of the WFP 2020 objectives.**	• **International frameworks**. Better linkage to key long-term strategic frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
• **Leadership. Political commitment at the highest level, Strategic legislature project.** Coordinated follow-up by Lehendakaritza.	• **Participation**. Wide stakeholder participation turns out crucial. The high level of participation for the design of WFP 2020 has not been maintained with the same intensity throughout the period of validity.
• **Involvement. Commitment of management and technical teams from the different Government Departments.**	• **Long-term vision**. Given that environmental progress generally need more than five years to materialize, it is essential to offer a WFP with a long-term time horizon: 2030.
• **Culture. Incorporated the WFP 2020 in the culture of the Basque Administration as an inescapable reference and strategic framework for the planning of the different sector policies.**	• **Efficiency**: WFP can help increase synergies between the various sector policies. In particular, the Key Projects can be the essential instrument for the cooperation of actions to improve efficiency and save costs.
• **Governance**. The PMA 2020 is established as a modern governance tool to address current environmental challenges and is aligned with Europe's environmental strategies.	• **Social considerations.** Consider social aspects based on existing links with the environment such as impacts on vulnerable groups, employment, and inequality.
• **Strategic. WFP 2020 has contributed to more predictable, faster and better**	• **Multi-level governance**. WFP has yet to become a reference tool, gearing and

coordinated actions in environmental policy. Predictability has helped execute the actions.	operational and effective coordination between the Government and the local Administration (Provincial Councils and City Halls).
• **Result. Increased general recognition of the fact that environmental protection goes hand in hand with a sustainable economic model that creates jobs and prosperity.**	• **New challenges.** Addressing by 2030 the new challenges in critical areas such as mobility, energy, and food; as well as promoting instruments for knowledge and shared responsibility.
• **Process. Regulated, participatory and regular processes of monitoring and assessment of WFP 2020.**	• **Communication and citizenship**. It is necessary to develop a two-way communication process with its action plan throughout the WFP period.

Finally, despite being a tool for improvement, having a strategy or framework program for the formulation of long-term environmental policies in the Basque Country offers a high added value. It facilitates a necessary transformation in policymaking, as well as the recognition that environmental protection and sustainable economic growth go hand in hand.